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DRAGONS OF BARSATIVE

To my peers and equals, brothers and sister of the land of Barsaive, greetings;

It is with no small amount of concern that I bring this second collection of documents to your attention, because it poses a far greater threat to us all than Vasdenjas' penchant for loose speech. The materials collected here were acquired by an agent of mine in the palace of the Denairastas Clan of Iopos, one of the so-called "scales" of the Orichalcum Guard that protects the members of the Clan and their families. While the Holders of Trust are skilled enough in keeping the various enemies of Iopos from infiltrating them, I have been playing such games long before their city or family line was even founded. My agent has spent some time infiltrating the Holders of Trust and gaining the trust of the Denairastas in order to watch for any indication that the Outcast might violate the rulings of the Council at which he was Banished. These documents are proof that he has chosen to do so, and they mean dire news where the Denairastas are concerned. I have placed my own comments in your copies of the documents to provide what insight I can. Read them with care and see if you come to the same conclusions as I have. If so, I believe we must convene another Council to consider what should be done about this. In any event, I recommend taking precautions immediately.

My Children...

You have done well. My faith in your abilities is truly justified. But what you have achieved so far pales in comparison to what you will soon achieve with my help. You will take your rightful place as the stewards of the land and its people, guiding them with a firm hand to greater recognition of your glory. Your victory shall be a monument to the sacrifices I have made to prove my faith in you.

Although you have achieved much, now is not the time for congratulations or complacency. There remain many challenges in the path ahead for you, and many enemies who will seek to topple you from your high pinnacle, to crush and burn our dream and reduce it to bitter ashes, scattered on the wind. Throal and Thera remain at each others throats and a war between the two nations now seems certain, but there are other enemies older, wiser and far more powerful than the dwarf kingdom or even the mighty Thera Empire. These enemies are the dragons of Barsaive, particularly the Great Dragons and their many servants.

The dragons are unlike any challenge you have faced before. There are many reasons for this, the primary being that they do not follow the conventions and laws of any nation; they do not follow any rules or traditions but their own. They are supremely powerful, especially the great dragons, but they are also scattered and diverse, with their own goals and desires, much like the various nations and city-states of Barsaive you have maneuvered so well. To learn more of your heritage and move on to the next stage of the great game, you must learn to understand and play the dragons as skillfully as you have the Name-giver nations of this land.

To that end, I have created these documents. They describe the great dragons of Barsaive, along with some of the most powerful and influential Named dragons who might place themselves on the field of the game. Take this knowledge and study it carefully. Know your enemies as I know them, as deeply as possible, for when you know your enemies' thoughts and goals as well as you know your own, you are prepared to strike at them where they are most vulnerable. A battle against the dragons cannot be won through force of arms or even powerful spells. It can only be won when you learn to think like a dragon, to beat them at their own contest of deception and guile. I know this can be done. Just as I have come to think like humans, so too can you think like dragons. It is your family heritage.

The first lesson in conceptualizing as a dragon would is to think long, in a life measured not in years or even centuries, but in millennia, in the rise and fall of Name-giver nations and empires by the hundreds. Consider the implications of each act as they unfold throughout history and learn to sacrifice a lesser goal to serve a greater purpose that may not come to light for years to come. You have already applied this technique to good effect, but now you must adjust it for the span of creatures born before your line began.

You must understand the superiority of dragons above all other Name-givers. Understand the power granted by scales stronger than any armor, teeth and claws more deadly than any sword, eyes sharper than any bird's and other senses aware of more than most other Name-givers can imagine. Understand the power of a vast life and the knowledge and learning that comes of it. Understand the power of a harsh life where at every step you are tested for your fitness to survive, tested and made strong by the trials you undergo or else culled from your kind to prevent your weakness from contaminating others.

Though the dragons are powerful—the most powerful creatures in the land—they are not united, and often fight among themselves. They are bound by traditions more ancient than any Name-giver nation, and the ties of those





traditions can become a noose with a little careful weaving. They are often slow to act, vulnerable to the swiftness and skill that other Name-givers can apply to life. They do not understand and value the immediacy of other Name-givers as I do. Each year that passes in Barsaive is little more than an eyeblink to them, and, with the conflict between Throal and Thera drawing their attention, you can act before they are even aware anything is amiss.

The long thought and careful planning of dragons is unhurried and laggard at best by your standards, and they are seldom quick to react. You can easily press to gain the initiative against them. They claim to have learned the folly of acting too swiftly or too rashly, and the fear of another such mistake cripples them, forcing them to act methodically and carefully, behind the scenes, weighing every move. Dragons are patient hunters, as patient as the mountains and trees, and they will wait until time claims an enemy if nothing else. Use their patience against them and lull them into waiting for an opportune time that will never come. Before they realize it, it will be too late.

Read carefully the knowledge I have provided and see the patterns of age-old alliance and conflict between the great dragons of Barsaive. With some careful manipulation of the threads of the dragons' history and destiny, you may yet weave a pattern that will suit our goals—then nothing will stand in our way.

Glory to the Denairastas line, and your coming victory.

Your Sire,

Denairastas





MOUNTAINSHADOW

[Despite the opinions of those who accused me of self-aggrandizement at our recent Council, I believe I can be forgiven the questionable vanity of placing my own description first. I do this because I am concerned at the volume and accuracy of the Outcast's information about my resources, my abilities and even my goals. His nature gives him insights into our kind that few others can match, but his information about me is surprisingly current considering the circumstances... which leads me to believe that the Outcast may have innovative methods of gathering intelligence on each of us. With this in mind, we should strengthen our defenses and take steps to root out any spies (willing or unwitting) among our servants. I have already begun to do so, and I recommend that each of you do the same.]

Mountainshadow, one of the oldest and most powerful great dragons of Barsaive, is a meddler—more so than any other among all dragonkind. Some even call him a visionary, though I dispute that title for one so limited to his own view of things. He wants to know everything, and very nearly does. He is known among his fellow great dragons as Far Scholar for his tireless pursuit of knowledge in this world and others. His age gives him enormous influence, which he rarely chooses to exercise, but which he does not hesitate to use when he feels that the interests of dragonkind (as he defines them) are threatened. He is a small-minded tinkerer who collects lore as other dragons collect baubles, but he is a great dragon first and foremost. Never forget that, or make the error of underestimating him. Such a mistake is invariably fatal.

Mountainshadow shows great interest in the Young Races and has countless Name-giver servants in places where no one would expect to find them. The recent incursion of the Theran Empire into Barsaive has roused him from his endless studies and experiments, and moved him to take action with the formation of what the Therans refer to as the Dragon's Network. His Name-giver servants make up a significant part of this vast net of spies and lackeys, enhancing his influence even more among the dragons of Barsaive.

Mountainshadow's Nature

Mountainshadow was hatched long before the founding of any kingdom in Barsaive, from an egg clutch protected by the mighty All-Wings, greatest of the great dragons. To be of the clutch of All-Wings is to be a prince among dragons, with a proud and noble heritage, and a heavy burden of responsibility. All-Wings taught her hatchlings the traditions and history of dragonkind and raised them to become wise and fierce beyond all other dragons. And so they were, and so they remain to this day. Unfortunately, the surviving descendants of All-Wings are not worthy of their illustrious foremother. They may have her power, but cannot claim her wisdom or clarity of vision.

Many of her clutch did not survive their first centuries of life; competition between them was fierce and often lethal. As the last clutch of All-Wings passed through their wild years into adulthood, the greatest of dragons was struck down by the treachery of Name-givers and her own arrogance. Mountainshadow and his clutch-mates are therefore the last dragons hatched and raised by All-Wings, and Mountainshadow and his brother Icewing are the two I know of who have survived and prospered through all the centuries since. Through overwhelming strength and all the guile at his command, Mountainshadow remains first among his kind.

Mountainshadow's size is as immense as his age. His vast body is longer than an air galley, his jaws capable of crushing a troll in a single bite. His silvery-blue scales shimmer in the light like polished armor. Many have seen him soaring high above his domain in the Dragon Mountains or, more rarely, flying out over the Badlands or the nearby Servos Jungle. (He has a lair hidden in the depths of the Badlands, a place so blighted by the Scourge that even many dragons shun it. That Mountainshadow dwells there is testament to his fearlessness; the most dangerous denizens of the Badlands pose no threat to him.)

Mountainshadow is one of the few dragons who pursues knowledge above all for its own sake—indeed, he is obsessed with collecting every scrap of lore he can lay talons on. (To act on his knowledge is another thing entirely; like most of Barsaive's dragons, he prefers talking to doing. Only those who threaten to cross him feel his swift wrath.) Lost magic, ancient legends, scraps of history concerning every Name-giver race in addition to his own... all these and more, Mountainshadow prizes as another might prize a rare and precious pearl or a fine living-crystal sword. He also eagerly consumes the latest news and gossip from the far corners of the world. His many servants are his eyes and ears throughout Barsaive and beyond, bringing him the knowledge he craves. Dragonspeech enables Mountainshadow to perceive the experiences of his servants directly from their memories, and he often relives their experiences in this manner. He knows a great deal and can discover even more. Given enough time, no secret is safe from him—not though





it be ringed with a thousand allegedly unbreakable enchantments. Remember this in dealing with him, and seed your misinformation carefully.

Mountainshadow's genuine interest in the Young Races makes him unusual among our kind. Most dragons regard other Name-givers as lesser creatures valuable only as servants or as a source of food or sport. Few recognize the value of other Name-givers to dragonkind, much less the hidden potential you possess. Mountainshadow dimly understands these truths, though he still regards the Young Races as lesser beings. His interest in your kind has led him to involve himself in the affairs of younger Name-givers in the past; during the Scourge, he sheltered many in the Dragon Mountains against the Horrors' onslaught. I still have not fathomed his reasons for doing so, as he is otherwise opposed to mingling with the Young Races. He prefers to watch over them from afar, seeing to their welfare (as he defines it) through intermediaries.

Curiosity drives Mountainshadow more than any other motive, to the point where it might be considered one of his few weaknesses. His thirst for knowledge apparently cannot ever be fully quenched. This means he might be tempted with offers of lore—even bits of trivia meaningless to other Name-givers have value for him. His desire to know everything outweighs all other desires and considerations. I have known him to spare the lives of Name-givers who offended him merely to hear their life stories and understand the reasons for their actions. Often this indulgence buys the offenders only enough time to tell their tales before Mountainshadow devours them. Others, lucky enough to amuse their captor sufficiently, are allowed to live. How Mountainshadow judges which shall live and which shall die, I cannot say. Therefore, I advise caution in any dealings with him, no matter how far removed those dealings may seem from any direct link with you.

The Dragon Mountains

Mountainshadow and his brood live in the Dragon Mountains in south eastern Barsaive. His frequent flights amid those mountains, no doubt meant to display himself as a distant wonder to other Name-givers, gave the mountains their Name. High and steep, the Dragon Mountains provide a natural fortress for Mountainshadow and his servants. His dragons and drakes can soar with ease over the jagged peaks and deep valleys, while Mountainshadow's other servants control the few narrow passes that lead into the heart of his territory. Name-givers traveling to this place from elsewhere face untold hardships and hazards; they are almost certain to be stopped, and even likely to be slain, before they come anywhere near the great dragon's lair. If Mountainshadow himself does not dispatch them, his loyal drakes or other minions will. And because they are so numerous and vigilant, to avoid their attention takes great care.

Like other great dragons, Mountainshadow guards a clutch of eggs deep in his lair. Some of his hatchlings roam the Dragon Mountains; other Name-givers who dwell there consider them sacred and protect them from harm. I know of three adult dragons who lair in the Dragon Mountains, all of whom are surely onetime hatchlings of Mountainshadow's—and there may be more yet unknown to me. I have also seen many wyverns there, which suggests that Mountainshadow did not shelter only other Name-givers during the Scourge. He seems also to have cared for many young dragons and dragon hatchlings, who are now approaching maturity. (Mountainshadow now cares for few eggs in his lair and refuses to take any others. Doubtless his attention to other affairs in Barsaive has taken precedence over his much-vaunted sense of responsibility toward his own race.) The wyverns claim many of the mist-shrouded valleys, defending them ferociously against all challengers. Mountainshadow's lackeys know well enough to avoid these places and leave the younglings alone. Because so many creatures live in the lush valleys and on the slopes, no wyvern hunts Name-giver prey except to defend Mountainshadow's domain.

Mountainshadow's lair is as vast and ancient as its principal inhabitant—a veritable maze of caves and tunnels that reach deep into the heart of the Dragon Mountains. Should you succeed in getting so far, you will recognize it first by the broad plateau above which it sits. During the Scourge, its chambers and tunnels served as a vast kaer of sorts where the Young Races sheltered under Mountainshadow's protection. Some of these Name-givers live there still, though the great dragon's actual resting place remains barred to all except those with Mountainshadow's express permission to set foot within. Mountainshadow summons Name-givers into his presence from time to time, but rarely grants audiences in his lair to any save the Young Races who live in the Dragon Mountains. He prefers to deal with others through his various servants (another example of his hypocrisy regarding other Name-givers; he condemns direct action among them as evil, but sees nothing wrong with meddling in their lives by indirect means).





The Badlands Lair

I have yet to discover Mountainshadow's other lair in the nearby Badlands, the place from which he aided young Prince Neden and J'role the Honorable Thief during the Death Rebellion in Throal. The Badlands are an inhospitable place even for a great dragon, and so Mountainshadow rarely spends more than a month or so there at any given time. Afterwards, he always returns to the Dragon Mountains. He does not hunt in the Badlands, instead flying some distance to seek prey in the Servos Jungle or along the banks of the Serpent River. Since the arrival of the Theran behemoth on the shores of Lake Ban, Mountainshadow has curtailed his visits to his Badlands hideaway. I suggest you take advantage of his recent absence and redouble your efforts to find it.

Mountainshadow appears to be studying the effects of the Scourge on the Badlands and similar places. In the first years following the Scourge's end, he displayed unusual concern over the corruption of places like the Badlands, the Wastes and the Poisoned Forest. Many other dragons believe these places will revert to their former states in time, but Mountainshadow fears otherwise. I cannot say why. His concerns do not, however, appear to outweigh his desire to meddle in the affairs of Barsaive and the Theran Empire. His ever-expanding network of minions spends far more time spying on the Therans and on other Barsaivian powers—including your own city—than in attempting to solve the riddles of Horror-tainted regions.

Treasures

Mountainshadow's personal chamber holds his most valuable treasures, particularly his precious library of lore and mementos collected over the centuries. He possesses abundant memory-crystals that hold knowledge hoarded since long before the founding of Thera, Throal or any existing Name-giver kingdom. These gems hold the first-hand knowledge and experience of many beings, frozen in the crystal but accessible through dragonspeech—a far more efficient and accurate method of preserving knowledge than crude written or spoken languages. These gems, priceless to any number of Name-givers, lie under the ever-watchful gaze of their owner, warded with magical traps and guardians created by Mountainshadow.

The most precious jewel in Mountainshadow's collection is an Eye of All-Wings, cut from the body of All-Wings her-self and contained within a crystal sphere. The other Eye is in Icewing's possession. The two Eyes are magically connected, allowing Mountainshadow and Icewing to speak to each other in times of need even though they are separated by a distance of many days' flight. The Eyes of All-Wings also allow them to scry distant places and even gaze into the depths of the netherworlds. Powerful magical wards can shield places and people from the Eyes, but the greatest protection is to not be where the Eyes turn their gaze. However, this formidable magic has a weakness—namely, the limits of its owner. Even with the Eye of All-Wings, Mountainshadow cannot watch all of Barsaive at once, especially given his preoccupation with recent events concerning the Theran Empire. Provided you take care, you may accomplish much without Mountainshadow suspecting.

Mountainshadow's Powers

Like any dragon of his venerable age, Mountainshadow is powerful of tooth and claw, but the true source of his strength is his vast store of arcane knowledge. Mountainshadow knows more mystic secrets than anyone else in Barsaive, perhaps more than anyone in this part of the world. Your own knowledge, wide-ranging and formidable though it may be compared to that of ordinary Name-givers, is mere child's play against Mountainshadow's magical wisdom. He is a potent spellcaster, the most capable I have ever seen. Though I have created many spells since I last encountered him, I can say with certainty that he knew every spell and ritual I knew then, and many others besides. His command of the arcane arts allows him to ward his lair and create magical traps and servants whenever he requires them. His extensive library contains magical lore unknown to other Name-givers, powerful enough to shake mountains or reduce cities to smoking ruins. When you hear Mountainshadow's honeyed words, remember the power that underlies them. And remember also his willingness to act against those who stray from his vision of what the world should be. His power brought about my own fall from grace (as Mountainshadow might put it) because I dared to disagree with his notions of a dragon's proper place in the world's affairs. If he could do what he has done to one as powerful as I, imagine what he might do to lesser enemies... and be cautious accordingly.

Along with his mastery of the mystic arts, Mountainshadow is especially skilled in the use of dragonspeech and dragonsight. He has refined the ancient arts of touching the minds of others and sifting through their memories like a





heap of gleaming gems to find exactly the one he seeks. He once spoke of experiencing life from the view of the Young Races, and how vastly different the world looked through their eyes (as I could have told him ten times over, but no matter). With dragonspeech, Mountainshadow can pluck the very thoughts from inside your head. His gaze is like a viper's, paralyzing in its intensity; while you stand helplessly pinned by it, Mountainshadow slithers through your mind and takes whatever he desires. He can also bend your mind to his will, planting ideas, feelings and even memories. The crafting of such thoughts, which subtly tug at the threads of a Name-giver's pattern until they change it, requires time and concentration, but can be a more powerful weapon than flame or claw.

Mountainshadow used dragonspeech to enter the mind of Prince Neden when he lay dissected and dying, healing the dwarf prince and restoring him to wholeness. Who can say what seeds of thought the dragon planted then, or how they might blossom now that Neden is King of Throal? And what does Icewing think of Mountainshadow's interference with the dwarfs, whom Icewing likes to think of as his playthings? The answers to these questions are worth discovering, for they may aid you in your designs. And when you move against Mountainshadow, as you inevitably must, you will need all the help you can get.

Like his other abilities, Mountainshadow's dragonsight is as sharp as his talons. He understands patterns and the delicate threads that make them, especially the power of patterns to create and destroy.

[Something the Outcast understands as well. I advise all of you to keep close watch over your Pattern Items and those tied to anything you value. The Denairastas have shown skill in exploiting Pattern Items already in Throal. Do not underestimate them.]

In the Badlands, he appears to be studying the land's pattern to learn how it may be rewoven, thereby restoring the land to health. But what can be woven can also be unwoven, as you know yourselves. Mountainshadow will not hesitate to turn such formidable knowledge against you, should you openly declare yourselves his enemies.

Mountainshadow's Servants

Mountainshadow has more Name-giver servants than any other great dragon, save perhaps Earthroot and his underground kingdom of t'skrang. He appears to lack a significant number of drakes, though some of Mountainshadow's Name-giver servants may be drakes in disguise. The recent loss of some of his drakes in the distant province of Indrisa may have opened a potential weakness in his network of spies.

Drakes

The only known drake who serves Mountainshadow is Rosper, a young drake actively involved in Mountainshadow's spy network and its operations against the Theran Empire. Rosper has the impulsiveness and fire of youth, only somewhat tempered by his master's guidance. With the right prodding, you might trick him into taking rash action. Rosper wishes to please his master, as most drakes do, but this desire is matched by his fury toward the Theran Empire, and (like most drakes) he lacks the patience and wisdom that centuries of living can bring. Rosper wishes to act against the Therans soon, rather than playing his master's waiting game. As the great dragons tighten the reins on their drakes, a rift between master and servant may appear; be watchful and ready to exploit it.

[Our enemies may well try to turn our servants against us. I know others say that a drake cannot betray its creator and master, but I must respectfully remind everyone that we believed the same thing of our servants once before and were proven tragically wrong. We should not make the same mistake twice.]

Three of Mountainshadow's other drakes disappeared recently while on an errand for their master far from home, in the Theran province of Indrisa. They will prove difficult and costly to replace, and so Mountainshadow must either manage without their service or expend the time and effort to create new drakes. He may even attempt to find the lost ones, which may leave him vulnerable in other ways.

[I fear that the disappearance of my other drakes is related to Denairastas "exiles" calling themselves Broken Keys, living in Indrisa and serving its Overgovernor as mercenaries. These Broken Keys may well be agents of the Holders of Trust. It is possible, though unlikely, that they have captured and questioned my missing drakes. If so, they may be the source of some of the Outcast's information. However, I still do not know how the Outcast learned the rest of what he knows about me.]





Name-givers

Of greater concern than Mountainshadow's drakes is the multitude of Name-givers who serve him. Many of them are descendants of those he sheltered from the Scourge, safe behind formidable magical wards and protections. As a price for his aid, Mountainshadow required each Name-giver village to keep a record of its history throughout the Scourge and also to compile its previous history as far back as anyone remembered. The villagers presented their histories to the great dragon after the Scourge, when the Name-givers left Mountainshadow's lair for the outside world. As with so many things this dragon has done, I cannot fathom his reason, apart from his obsession with collecting knowledge of all kinds. Perhaps it gives him pleasure simply to know what others do not, so that he may believe himself wiser than all other living beings. What he expects to do with the histories of insignificant villages populated by the very Young Races whose lives must not be "tampered with," I cannot imagine.

Following the Scourge, those who sheltered with Mountainshadow chose to remain in or near the Dragon Mountains. They worshipped Mountainshadow as their savior and protector, and remained near him to retain his protection against the dangers that the Scourge had left behind. The hundreds of Name-givers who live in these mountain villages revere Mountainshadow and do his bidding without question. I have tried to shake the loyalty of more than a few, and failed. This only proves what I have always believed, and what so many of my fellow dragons refuse to believe, about the true potential of other Name-givers. Those who have learned to serve well are more valuable to us than any type of servant our magic can create.

Until recently, Mountainshadow made little use of the Name-givers at his command. They remained in the Dragon Mountains, sustaining their own isolated existence under their protector's watchful eye. But the renewed activity of the Theran Empire in Barsaive has prompted Mountainshadow into the very action he has always pretended to disapprove—he has organized his Name-giver servants into part of a huge network loyal to Barsaive's great dragons, intended to coordinate operations against the Therans and possibly even ally with some of Barsaive's other great powers. (Needless to say, he does not include Iopos among that number.)

Many of Mountainshadow's Name-giver servants are adepts, some of them quite skilled. He may have taught the spellcasting adepts among them himself, though certainly he has not taught them any of his greatest arcane secrets. He is as reluctant to part with truly valuable lore as he is enamored of collecting it.

[Not so, as this collection proves. I simply prefer not to interfere with the training and development of adepts in the villages under my protection. They learn the skills and talents of their Disciplines quite well on their own.]

Dark Tooth

One servant of Mountainshadow, a human Named Dark Tooth, deserves particular attention. Dark Tooth is Mountainshadow's primary envoy and messenger to the world outside the Dragon Mountains, and he carries word from his master to other servants of the dragon scattered throughout Barsaive. Dark Tooth also occasionally hires adepts and adventurers to carry out important tasks for Mountainshadow that cannot—for various reasons—be entrusted to the other Name-givers serving him.

Dark Tooth is a human male, slight of build and unassuming of feature, the sort of human to whom few give a second thought. His hair is dark and he wears a hooded cloak to conceal his features much of the time. He is not known to follow any Discipline, nor has he openly displayed any talents or spells, but the ease with which he appears and disappears and his long years of service to Mountainshadow suggest that he is certainly an adept, perhaps even a drake in human guise. This latter possibility is strongly suggested by an incident said to take place several years ago, when a thief living in a village near the Dragon Mountains decided to follow Dark Tooth one night after the messenger had left the village. The thief's remains were found the next day scattered across the village green—the slaying was clearly not the work of an adept. Most Name-givers heeded the message, and will not pry too deeply into Dark Tooth's affairs. If you wish to learn more of him, you will need to resort to other means than simple questioning of local folk. They rightly fear him and his dragon lord, and will tell you nothing freely.

If Dark Tooth is a drake, he must be an old and experienced one, making him a valuable asset to Mountainshadow and a danger to us. Dark Tooth may very well be the coordinating agent behind Mountainshadow's network of spies, carrying the commands of his master all across Barsaive. Certainly, command of an operation as large in scope as this network of spies is beyond the capabilities of a young drake like Rosper. Gather all the information you can about Dark Tooth and his activities, and you may discover a way to use Mountainshadow's most trusted servant against him.





[I wish our friends luck. Dark Tooth is far cleverer and more capable than the Outcast imagines.]

Allies and Enemies

Mountainshadow has his share of friends and foes among his fellow dragons and the other Name-givers of Barsaive. Some of these relationships may be useful to our cause; others pose potential threats to our enterprises. Use subtlety and wisdom in exploiting the former; watch carefully for the latter, and lose no chance to strike a blow where you can.

Among the great dragons of Barsaive, Mountainshadow is on particularly good terms with his brother, Icewing. The two share similar interests in the affairs of Name-givers, and between them form the core of the so-called Dragon's Network opposing the Therans. Being dragons, they cooperate only within carefully prescribed boundaries and rituals, but they regularly exchange information and aid when needed and are the two most closely allied great dragons in the province. Through the Eyes of All-Wings, they can communicate swiftly from their respective lairs and observe a great deal of what happens throughout Barsaive.

The only great dragon that might be called an enemy of Mountainshadow is Usun, the master of the Liaj Jungle. The two have disagreed on almost every aspect of dealing with Name-givers in Barsaive and with the Theran Empire in particular. Though wise enough never to oppose Mountainshadow directly, Usun holds no love for his elder; indeed, he has lately taken to openly expressing disdain for Mountainshadow's tendency to make pets of the Young Races. He has shown similar contempt for Icewing's involvement with the Kingdom of Throal. Of course, Usun hates me as much, if not more, than he does Mountainshadow, but his enmity toward the master of the Dragon Mountains could prove useful.

I would hope such a transparent ploy had no hope of success. Though we have numerous disagreements, I would certainly not consider Usun an enemy, and would prefer to see us all work together to deal with the threat posed by the Impertinent Ones and the Outcast and his spawn.

It is not only his fellow great dragons that Mountainshadow can call friend. Other dragons of his brood living in the Dragon Mountains look to him for guidance (as they have always done), and will doubtless come to his aid should he ever call upon them. The eldest is a male Named Thunderwing, who lairs high atop a peak in the central Dragon Mountains. Thunderwing has dark gray scales, shading to a deep blue on his chest and wings. He is a proud and imperious dragon, with little understanding of Mountainshadow's interest in the Young Races, but he respects his elder and bows to his will. He hunts to the north and east of the Dragon Mountains, often ranging toward the Aras Sea.

The other two of Mountainshadow's brood known to me are Firedancer and Smokeweaver, a male and a female from the same clutch. Firedancer has dark brown scales with reddish highlights that gleam and ripple, as if flames were flickering across his hide. He lairs in the spur of the Dragon Mountains near Death's Sea and sometimes soars high on its thermal currents. He shares his egg-parent's curiosity and spends much time studying Death's Sea and portions of the Badlands. Firedancer also occasionally attacks mining ships over Death's Sea—whether from youthful pique at having his domain invaded or simply for amusement, I cannot say.

Smokeweaver has dark gray scales, and holds herself more aloof than Firedancer from other Name-givers and their doings. She lives in the depths of the Dragon Mountains, sometimes flying southward into the wild lands beyond Barsaive to hunt and explore. Smokeweaver is of an age to find a mate and breed, but has refused Thunderwing's advances. She knows that she must entrust any eggs she lays to a great dragon other than Mountainshadow, who refuses to care for more. To all appearances, however, this refusal to be bothered has not altered Smokeweaver's loyalty toward the dragon who raised her.

Unlike Icewing, Mountainshadow is not directly involved in the affairs of any Name-giver nation—he prefers to pull the puppet strings from somewhere out of sight, so that none may accuse him of unseemly meddling in the Young Races' affairs. He does, however, have strong ties to two important Name-givers in the Kingdom of Throal: King Neden and his advisor, J'role. During the Death Rebellion years ago, Mountainshadow helped J'role the Honorable Thief find the missing Prince Neden, who was being held by the Theran nethermancer Mordom in a secret lair in the Badlands. After J'role and his allies defeated Mordom, Mountainshadow used his dragon powers to cleanse the dwarf prince of the nethermantic taint and restore him to health.

Now Neden has become king and J'role the leader, or as he is known in Throal, the Senior Gatherer of the Eye of Throal (another large network of potential enemies). The gratitude both feel toward Mountainshadow for his blatant interference in the young prince's life means that they owe him a debt, one that he will doubtless call due whenever it best suits his purposes. In effect, the Kingdom of Throal is at the beck and call of Mountainshadow and Icewing, both of





whom are likely to consider Throal an ally against the Theran Empire's incursion into Barsaive. If Mountainshadow and his brother come to Throal's aid, and if they convince Barsaive's other great dragons to do the same, they are likely to tip the balance of power strongly toward the dwarf kingdom. Needless to say, agents of the Theran Empire will do almost anything to prevent such an alliance against them. Think on this, and consider carefully any possibilities it may open for advancing our own interests.

[Ironic that the Outcast can see the viability of my proposals, even if some of my peers cannot. Throal's enemies clearly fear an alliance between us because it threatens them. I ask you all to consider the possibility of alliance with Throal once again in light of this information. Shall we support Throal against the Empire, as wisdom dictates, or sit idly by when so much is at stake?]

Mountainshadow's Goals

[As always, the Outcast retains a clear head for tactics, despite being blinded by self-importance and disregard for our traditions. His analysis of my goals is accurate enough to cause us all concern. Read what he has written—and then, if you are wise, you will consider altering own your plans to account for it.]

Mountainshadow has many goals, especially since the arrival of the Theran behemoth in Barsaive's heartland. I offer you only the uppermost of his many plots and schemes. Use these writings not merely to know what he intends next, but also to understand how he moves the pieces spread out on the game board of Barsaive, and you may begin to anticipate his moves in advance. Only through such application of intelligence and guile will you have any chance of succeeding against Mountainshadow; for even as powerful as you have become, he is as far beyond you in power and sheer cunning as a windling is beyond a flying insect. He can be thwarted; did I not know this to be true, I would not have set down these words. But never forget that among all the Name-givers of Barsaive, we great dragons are the oldest and strongest and canniest—and that among great dragons, none is older or stronger or cannier than Mountainshadow. Remember this, and you may yet win out against him.

To Gather Knowledge

First and foremost, Mountainshadow seeks to know. He is compelled to study whatever he does not understand, and to gather all the knowledge he can about it before acting. Mountainshadow's immense network of servants exists primarily to bring him information on everything from the vital to the utterly trivial. This means that Mountainshadow will often delay his actions until he believes he has enough information to fully understand the situation. Through obfuscation, falsehoods and hiding important facts among an avalanche of trivia, you may keep him occupied until it is too late for him to move effectively against you. Keep in mind, however, that Mountainshadow has the accumulated knowledge of millennia at his disposal. Assume that he knows your plans in advance, and act accordingly.

[Much as I dislike it, I must concede the possibility that this entire document was written solely for our benefit, and that it mixes lies and half-truths with genuine information about the Outcast's knowledge, opinions and plans. By all means, take whatever steps you feel are necessary to confirm facts revealed here, as I am already doing.]

To Deal with the Theran Empire

For the past several months, Mountainshadow has been ceaselessly agitating for action against the Theran Empire because it threatens Barsaive's freedom. This agitation was most recently demonstrated by a Council convened by Mountainshadow. I know not the outcome of this most recent Council, the first since the end of the Scourge, but trust when I tell you that the consequences of this Council will soon reveal themselves. Great dragons act slowly and reluctantly, but once they decide upon a course of action, they are rarely subtle, and act swiftly and brutally.

The great dragons and the Empire love each other little, and so the dragons are inclined to look favorably on aiding Throal simply because the dwarf kingdom likewise hates the Therans. The threat currently posed by Thera provides ideal cover for our own activities, until it is far too late for anyone to stop us, provided we use our opportunities wisely. However, a common enemy such as Thera may also unite the disparate, squabbling factions of Barsaive before our plans have borne fruit. Be watchful of such a development, and do whatever is necessary to sabotage it.

To Explore the Minds of the Young Races

The thoughts, feelings and fleeting lives of the Young Races fascinate Mountainshadow, and he continues to use his pet Name-givers to explore these races' necessarily limited experience of the Universe. In many ways,





Mountainshadow is closer to the Young Races than any other great dragon. Icewing may see outsiders in his lair more often, but Mountainshadow touches the minds of the Young Races almost constantly—especially since the formation of his spy network. This means that Mountainshadow understands the feelings and motivations of Name-givers better than most dragons, because he is involved with so many. Such strong connections to the minds of others may cause Mountainshadow to lose his perspective; more practically, we can use it to feed him false information.

To Protect the Inhabitants of the Dragon Mountains

Mountainshadow vigilantly guards all the Name-givers in his domain. No sky raider or Theran slaver is foolish enough to trespass in the skies over the Dragon Mountains when easier prey is available. An immediate threat to the inhabitants of his domain may distract Mountainshadow's attention from other matters, forcing him to turn his gaze closer to home and leaving the field freer for us to operate.

To Discover the Fate of his Lost Drakes

The disappearance of his drakes in Indrisa greatly concerns Mountainshadow, and he is certain to investigate what became of them. Doing so, of course, means committing resources that he might otherwise have sent elsewhere. With so many of his Name-giver servants deeply entangled in his monitoring of Theran activity, Mountainshadow is likely to send Dark Tooth to engage a group of adepts for this enterprise rather than commit his own people. This presents an opportunity to learn more about Dark Tooth and perhaps gain access to him through Mountainshadow's chosen agents.





ABAN

[Though I sometimes chafe at Mistweaver's isolation and the difficulties it imposes upon communicating with her, it has served us to some degree as an impediment to the Outcast's espionage efforts. His knowledge of her activities seems somewhat uncertain and replete with conjecture, though his skill at deduction and tactical analysis has helped him fill in many gaps in his knowledge.]

Aban, the enigmatic mistress of the Mist Swamps, is an intriguing mixture of contradictions, an unusual state for a member of a race that has thousands of years in which to decide how to look at the world. Though she supports the great dragons' philosophy of non-interference, upon occasion she takes a direct hand in shaping events in Barsaive, perhaps acting more directly than any other of her kind when she chooses to act. Though she usually seems distant as the stars, she sometimes rouses herself to heights of passion and fury that make even others of her kind pale at the thought of confronting her. Though she claims active dislike for most of the Name-giver races of Barsaive, she often chooses to frighten away interlopers into her domain, rather than slay them. Perhaps these things are due to the fact that she is among the youngest of the great dragons and has not had the same time that others have to solidify her opinions. Despite this, never think of her as fickle or erratic, for such will inevitably lead you to underestimate her. Her decisions always carry the full force of a draconic will.

Whatever the reasons for her vacillations, one thing about Aban remains constant and unchanging. She allows no one to reach the heart of the Mist Swamps. Her vigil over the ancient, elusive ruins of Yrns Morgath, the city long lost in the depths of the swamp, is eternal and unceasing. Only other dragons may approach that ancient place without raising her ire, and she takes a dim view of those who prevail upon her too often or who do not show the proper deference when seeking audience. As you will understand, the nature of the place in which she keeps her lair and the vigilance with which she protects it makes it difficult to gather information about her and her doings; much of what I know comes from past associations.

Aban's Nature

Of the great dragons of Barsaive, Aban is the only one not born during the Age of Dragons. Aban was among the very first dragons hatched under the care of the mighty Cloudtamer during the first century of this magically-endowed age. Cloudtamer was a warrior among dragons, the fiercest of the fierce. Though his magical skills were not insignificant, he greatly enjoyed physical conflict and developed magic that augmented those capabilities above any other. As impatient as a great dragon may be said to be, he typically sought direct and violent solutions to his problems.

Cloudtamer was a harsh sire, even by the standards of a race that deliberately culls the weak from its numbers. He deliberately exposed his brood to perils whose descriptions would blacken the pages upon which I write, and he often pitted his hatchlings against each other in physical contests. The slightest weakness earned reproof, and consistent failure meant exile to the wilderness or death at his talons. Aban's gender earned her no lenience, for female dragons must, if anything, be stronger than males, the better to protect themselves when they carry eggs. Little wonder, then, that Aban is so hard and fierce.

Cloudtamer met his end shortly before the beginning of the Scourge, at the hands of the Theran Empire. A proud symbol of the strength of dragonkind, he was identified as the first target of the Theran behemoths when the Empire sought to discourage the great dragons from revealing magic that would protect people from the Scourge. Legendary though his strength was, his direct method of solving problems was not sufficient to the task, and he was destroyed. While few dragons retain lasting emotional attachments to the great dragons who raise them, Aban deeply respected her sire for his lessons and the strength they engendered. When the Therans killed Cloudtamer, they made of Aban an eternal and implacable enemy, a fact that the commanders and crews of airships in the region above and around the Mist Swamps have begun to learn personally.

[Alas for the loss of Cloudtamer. As disrespectful and short-tempered as he was wont to be, his willingness to fight at the shedding of a scale would be of use to us now. His strength and prowess were undeniable, and his fire might have roused us to action before now. I take comfort that one of his brood should have grown into a strength so like to his.]

Aban was taught to thrive in a world that slew nearly all of those born with her, and her strength and aggression led her into adulthood earlier than is common. She is the only great dragon among all those born in this age. Her relative youth works against her in many ways. First, she is but newly admitted to the society of the great dragons. Her voice is accorded little influence among the older dragons at Councils, who consider themselves far wiser than she (though to





ignore her reveals the lie behind that opinion). She fanatically adheres to custom and ritual, especially the Rite of the Fifteen Venerations, as a way of assuring that she is given the respect that is her due. Second, she has not the same depth of experience as the other great dragons, a fact that sometimes leads her into what passes for impetuosity among her kind. She has not the same control over herself that most other great dragons have, and her rage sometimes gets the better of her. Third, she has not the degree of mastery over her powers that great dragons of the likes of Mountainshadow and Icewing have. Do not believe that she is not formidable in her own right; the experiences of those who have sought the lost city of Yrns Morgath prove otherwise.

Physically, Aban is larger than most other dragons of her age, perhaps only Mountainshadow is larger. Despite this, she has no difficulty moving about the Mist Swamps completely unseen; she can appear from the gloom of the swamps suddenly and without warning, a fact well-described in journals left at Throal's Great Library by those who have survived encounters with her. The same tales that agree so completely on this account differ greatly on another, however—that of Aban's coloration. In one book she is described as having scales the deep red of old blood and eyes as black as the midnight sky, while another tome paints a picture of her with greenish-black scales and unsettling yellow eyes. When I knew her, her scales were a glossy black that ran with subtle hints of deep blue, while her eyes were the clear blue of the long-frozen ice at the tops of mountains. Whatever the reason for it, be it the effects of living in the Mist Swamps or some deliberate magical change, Aban's coloration can vary. Rely not on the color of her scales to identify her.

Keep all of this in mind as you plan the next stage of your conquest of Barsaive; always consider where she may stand and how she may affect you. Though she remains largely in her lair in the Swamps, she might come forth at any time. Remember her upbringing, her strength and her aggression. If she sees you as an enemy or you earn her anger, she will strike, and decisively. Watch for your chance to take advantage of the beginnings of a schism between Aban and the remainder of the great dragons of Barsaive. Be subtle, though, for the division is as yet so small that the dragons themselves are likely not aware of it, and efforts not guided with the utmost of care might draw their attention to it and destroy its usefulness. Never forget the enmity Aban bears the Therans. As the hostility between the Empire and the Kingdom of Throal grows more heated, her antipathy toward the elves may prove useful in keeping the Therans off balance and prolonging the conflict long enough to weaken both sides until they have no power to resist your own advances.

[Here the Outcast reminds me that his purpose is not only to warn the Denairastas of our strength, but to point out ways in which they may attempt to use us as weapons against each other, dividing us in much the way they hope to divide the other forces of Barsaive, so that none may resist them. I doubt that they have any hope of achieving such a goal, but it behooves us to remain vigilant against such machinations, so that our confidence in our ability to see and resist them does not prove to be the weakness that allows them to succeed.]

Mistweaver, though I dispute the Outcast's claim that your words were held in less accord than those of your elders at our recent Council, I offer you the Rite of Transgression as an apology for any perceived slight on my part.]

The Mist Swamps

Aban makes her lair in one of the least hospitable locations in Barsaive, the Mist Swamps. It is here that the Serpent River divides into hundreds of smaller streams, creating a huge marsh that rolls into Death's Sea and becomes a sweltering, simmering expanse of steam and mud. Those few brave or foolish enough to venture into the swamps and fortunate enough to return report difficult and life-threatening conditions. Endless clouds of steam obscure vision and leech the vitality from the hardiest of explorers. The water is universally hot, simmering in some places and boiling in others. You might expect such a place to be wasted and devoid of life, but the swamps teem with living dangers, creatures ready to leap upon unwary travelers with claw, fang and venom.

The perils of the place form a formidable wall that shields Aban's lair from the prying eyes of all but the most insistent and skilled of searchers. Though tales abound of Aban attacking and devouring those who intrude upon her solitude, the number of people who die at her claw is far smaller than the number who perish in the hazardous swamp before ever seeing her. Though some explorers describe seeing Aban soaring above the Swamps or flying low through the mists, those who reach the heart of the Mist Swamps never see its most powerful resident until too late. She always appears suddenly, spraying searing liquid upon the unfortunates as she rears up from the water or stepping out of tattered curtains of mist that moments earlier completely concealed her from view.





The Lost City

At the heart of the Mist Swamps lies Aban's lair, the ancient lost city of Yrns Morgath. Some who have reached the deepest parts of the swamps have written of finding remains of ancient structures, be it a stretch of stone wall, a pitted archway with faint remains of ancient carvings or a short flight of stone stairs climbing up into the air toward a raised floor that no longer exists. All who reach this point encounter Aban, a meeting that ends either in the flight of the intruders or their death, for Aban grants no audiences. This ancient place has long since surrendered to the ravages of time and their harsh environment, not to mention the efforts of pre-Scourge treasure-seekers, yet it still holds artifacts of power and tomes of lore that harken back to the Age of Dragons. It may be that tales of these lost treasures are what entices the Theran Empire to brave Aban's wrath, for they still send search parties and airships into the swamps, despite the fact that Aban tolerates no Theran presence anywhere in her domain and attacks both airborne and land-bound explorers with daunting ferocity.

Treasures

Though some remnants from the Age of Dragons remain hidden within the tumbled ruins of Yrns Morgath, many such treasures were taken from the city before Aban made the place her lair. Adepts in search of tools with which to build their legends took some, while others were claimed by the servants of other great dragons, seeking artifacts they created in the olden days before the progeny of their folly rebelled against their so-called beneficent rule. The bulk of the magical treasures that Aban claims as her own she collects in the Hall of Trophies, items taken from Name-givers bold enough to invade her lair and daft enough not to leave at her insistence. These treasures run the full range from common threaded items to unique legendary treasures.

Such treasures do not explain the Theran persistence, however; no magical sword, no matter how powerful, could engender such strength of effort. It may be that the Theran Empire knows of the greatest treasure hidden in Yrns Morgath, a treasure that Aban has protected since before the Scourge. Secreted away somewhere in the ruins that are the heart of the Mist Swamps, protected behind magical barriers of such power that only a great dragon could create them, lie the remains of the hero Naaman Y'ross.

[It seems here that the Outcast is placing far too much faith in the words of the recent Theran report on the so-called Secret Societies of Barsaive (which regrettably contains a startling amount of accurate information about our own operatives and agents in Barsaive). One of the reports in this collection suggests that the remains of Naaman Y'ross are in fact within the ruins of Yrns Morgath in the Mist Swamps.]

Aban's true reasons for protecting these remains are unknown to me. I do not understand her fascination with this arrogant elf, for she holds the Therans in such grand contempt. Perhaps she sees this stewardship as an opportunity to thwart the Empire, by preventing the Therans from somehow returning their ancient hero to the living world. I do know that she believes that Naaman Y'ross yet has some part to play in the future of Barsaive, though what she expects that role to be is a mystery. If she knows of a way by which he may be returned to life, then it may be that she plans to use him to tip the scales of the balance between Thera and Throal. If this proves to be true, then winning such a hero to the cause of the Denairastas would prove a significant victory, indeed.

Mistweaver, if the Outcast's claims are true, I am concerned that we should learn of this from his words, rather than directly from yourself. While I do not presume to suggest that you should keep us informed of all that you do, what the Outcast suggests about the usefulness of Y'ross to our goals may have some merit. Given your hatred of the Empire, I can only presume that either you do not know how to return the hero to life, or that the Outcast is wrong in his claim that the hero's remains are at Yrns Morgath. In either case, certainly you can tell us if it is really the hero's remains that drive the Therans to search the swamps so vigorously, or something more?

Aban's Powers

By virtue of her youth, Aban has not yet developed her powers to the same extent as other great dragons, and she may be considered one of the magically weaker of her kind. Take this not as a slight against her strength, however, for no weakling could have survived the tutelage of Cloudtamer. Her magical might is less than that of her brethren because they have had many millennia to perfect and develop their powers, while she has had only just over two thousand years.

Aban has a great affinity for the magic of the elements, which may explain why she chooses to live in a place where all of the elements come together. She surely knows every Elementalist spell known to the scholars of both Thera and Throal, and knows of others that are unknown to those groups. She has proven such an effective master of these





types of magic that her pride in this regard may be exploited, my children; you may prove able to earn some small measure of tolerance from her if you can bring her elemental magic she does not yet know. Do not expect such an offer to mollify her for long, however.

In addition to spell magic, Aban exercises her mastery of the elements in many ways, including the summoning and control of elemental spirits. She often leaves elementals to guard her lair when she must be away from it for an extended time. Through the assistance of these elementals, Aban has attuned herself to the Mist Swamps and every living creature within them, extending her ability to sense her lair to include the entirety of the area. Everything the creatures of the swamps see and hear is known to her; they serve as her eyes and ears. These senses are usually distracted, as though she were listening to a crowd assembled outside a window. Whenever she chooses, however, she may concentrate upon a specific area and borrow the senses of the beasts therein, so as to see everything that occurs.

Aban's elemental powers also give her near-total control over the very terrain of the Mist Swamps. She can quickly change water from boiling to cool and back again. Solid earth becomes thin mud at her whim, and the gnarled and twisted trees of the swamp rearrange themselves as she wills. She can thicken and thin the billowing mists with a thought, no doubt the explanation for why such a huge creature as Aban can suddenly appear without warning before the most observant and perceptive of explorers.

Aban's Servants

Aban's servants are as secretive and as deadly as their mistress. The former fact makes accurate knowledge of their numbers and activities very difficult to obtain, and the latter fact makes the discovery of that information an event fraught with danger for Name-givers frailer than dragonkind. Aban tolerates no weakness or failure, a fact that motivates her servants to great effort on her behalf. Accustomed to surviving in the Mist Swamps, the dangers of the rest of Barsaive present them little difficulty; not even your carefully-watched city of Iopos is immune to their clandestine comings and goings.

Elemental Spirits and Creatures

Within the Mist Swamps themselves, Aban has numerous elemental spirits of all kinds and strengths at her beck and call. Most protect her lair, which explains the accounts of the swamp coming to life and consuming intruders. Others assist her with powerful elemental magic of uncertain purpose. Aban has sufficient knowledge and power to summon a number of Named elemental spirits, and has even called upon Great Form spirits from time to time. Even she bargains carefully with the latter, and the power these spirits give her should give you pause.

Aban's attunement to the Mist Swamps allows her to call upon the creatures of the swamps as she will, in much the way a Beastmaster might dominate an animal's mind to require of it some service. Accounts exist of creatures in the swamps attacking explorers in a fashion that hints at coordination or intelligence, and the will of the dragon is one of the few forces powerful enough to allow control of so many creatures at once. Do not underestimate the tiniest creature in this place, for everything is potentially an extension of Aban's will. And though this connection between Aban and the creatures of the Mist Swamps might at first seem to be an extension of the dragon's natural lair sense, I have reason to believe Aban is able to extend this influence beyond the borders of her chosen lair, up along the Serpent River, perhaps even as far as the southern edges of the Servos Jungle and along the southern stretch of the Tylon River. How she is able to do this is beyond my knowledge, but is something that certainly bears further thought.

Between her influence over the myriad creatures of the marshes, the elemental spirits that roam the mists and her control of the very terrain, any who would attack Aban must literally fight the Mist Swamps themselves before winning through to the dragon, a meeting which becomes more daunting on the heels of the momentous effort required to reach her. Fortunately, these perils are their worst only when actively directed by Aban, and she cannot focus her view everywhere at once. Stealth is the key to reaching the heart of Aban's domain, and you are more likely to succeed when she is busy defending the Mist Swamps from the incursions of Theran forces.

Drakes

The only drake known to serve Aban is a hot-blooded specimen Named Savryn. The last drake created by Cloudtamer before his death, Savryn is as physically imposing compared to other drakes as his mistress is to most other dragons. When Cloudtamer was slain, Savryn chose to serve Aban, for he saw her as the most worthy successor to her





sire. A well-skilled practitioner of the Warrior discipline, Savryn is much like his creator in his preference for physical solutions to problems. As one of Aban's primary servants outside the boundaries of the Mist Swamps, however, he has of late been forced to act in more circumspect a fashion. He chafes somewhat under this "training," particularly because he sees his mistress as being unfaithful to the principles of her sire. His physical predilections mean a skilled eye can watch him with only moderate effort as he moves through the lands of Barsaive. His preference for direct action may also serve as a lever to manipulate him, be it into action that he does not realize is counter to the interests of the great dragons or into direct insubordination.

[Again the Outcast strikes at the connection between us and our drake servants. Mistweaver, though I have not witnessed what he claims about the temperament of this drake, if what he says is true, you would do well to settle any issue that hangs unresolved between yourself and Savryn.]

I know not whether Aban has other drakes that serve her. I suspect that her mastery of the ritual magic of the great dragons is not yet sufficient to the task of creating them. If I am wrong in this and she has drakes in addition to Savryn, then they are not nearly as hot-headed and impulsive as he is, being instead skilled at subterfuge and deception. Should this prove true, I have no doubt that such servants would be nearly as physically powerful as Savryn himself, given the nature of their creator.

The Hand Of Corruption

You are no doubt aware, my children, of the legends that speak of a place called the Castle of Assassins which lies tucked away in the northern stretches of the Mist Swamps, where the waters of the marshes lap against the foothills of the Twilight Peaks. This place is a training ground for the Assassins Branch of the Hand of Corruption, who use it to train their killers to pursue their mad dream of expunging all life from the face of Barsaive and the lands beyond. Here they hone Name-givers into deadly weapons, under the very snout of the great dragon Aban. Why does Aban, who so thoroughly roots out intruders into her domain, tolerate the presence of these madmen on her very doorstep? There can be but one answer.

Since Aban allows only those who serve her to travel through and abide in the Mist Swamps, the denizens of the Castle of Assassins must be her servants. From all accounts that I have heard, they serve her current needs perfectly. They are ruthless and efficient, for only the most fit survive the training and live to carry their agenda into the lands of Barsaive. They move furtively and unseen through the shadows of the lands, executing their violence and escaping again into the darkness from which they spring. Silent and deadly, they carry out the will of their dragon mistress, though they are certainly unaware of her manipulation. I suspect that no more than a few understand that Aban truly directs the activities of the Castle of Assassins and the Hand of Corruption, using them to pull the strings of the province from the secrecy of her swamp lair. The rest go about their work, blissfully unaware that they are dark pawns in a deadly game with far greater reach and consequence than they will ever understand.

[Such claims as these are patently ludicrous, though I am glad to see that at least some of the Outcast's information is widely off the mark. It means that his sources of information are fallible, some small comfort considering the wealth of accurate knowledge he has gathered. He makes no mention of perhaps the most significant of her underlings. This is most interesting as he seems to have stumbled onto all the clues he should need to uncover these most mysterious and secretive of Mistweaver's servants. More importantly, this tale might misdirect the Holders of Trust and the Denairastas into dealing with the Hand of Corruption, useful to us both because it distracts them from us and helps get rid of an infestation that has long needed to be cleansed from this land.]

Allies and Enemies

Among her fellow great dragons, Aban retains a largely neutral stance. Given the complexity of interactions between them, and the generally solitary nature of dragonkind, this is not surprising. Her passion has led her to an occasional entanglement, insofar as mating between great dragons may truly be termed such, and her most recent involvement of this kind was with Earthroot, the king of the Pale Ones who live beneath the Throal Mountains. Though that involvement took place several decades ago, such a span is as a few breaths to a dragon, and the two remain on good terms. What that means in greater terms is uncertain, but remember that dragons rarely allow such things to influence their thoughts.

If Aban may be said to dislike any of the great dragons of Barsaive, it is Icewing. Icewing was the third of the great dragons to be a target of the Theran navy shortly before the Scourge, a target that was not in place when the arrow struck. Though I doubt that Aban begrudges Icewing his life, she no doubt feels that he had the necessary information to





save Cloudtamer from the fate he himself avoided. Had Icewing acted in time, Aban's sire would likely be alive today, a fact that gnaws at her whenever she must deal with him.

In the lands of Barsaive at large, Aban is a sworn enemy of the Theran Empire. Though her opposition to them lacks the enduring burn of ancient betrayal that most of the other great dragons feel toward the Empire, it has the hot fire of youthful anger and desire for vengeance that the other great dragons have not felt in millennia. Aban has recently indulged this anger with quite a vengeance, attacking several Theran vedettes that have braved the skies over the Mist Swamps. By now at least half a dozen ships lie scattered about the swamps, slowly sinking through the mud into obscurity. To my knowledge, no crewmen from these ships have escaped to tell the tale, for Aban hunts them down, an easy feat considering her attunement to the place. I do not know whether the capture of these ships appeases her anger or fuels it, but it is clear that the Therans will not be scared off by the threat Aban poses. If they continue as they have done, however, they may find their entire fleet in ruins beneath the Mist Swamps before they ever find what they seek.

Aban's hatred of the Therans extends to any who openly support them or side with them in the coming conflict. This causes significant problems for the t'skrang of House K'tenshin, whose nine-diamond banners fly on all manner of craft sailing up and down the southern stretches of the Serpent River. K'tenshin ships that stray too close to the Mist Swamps find themselves facing the onslaught of a very angry great dragon, and with each passing week, the definition of "too close" grows farther and farther out from the edge of the swamps proper. Perhaps Aban seeks to destroy the Theran crews manning K'tenshin ships, or perhaps she merely wishes to teach the t'skrang the folly of siding with her enemies. I know not yet whether this will prove beneficial to you, my children. If K'tenshin chooses to fight Aban, they will not have sufficient strength to pressure V'strimon and Syrtis, leaving those Houses free to defend against the advances of your allies in House Ishkarat. If K'tenshin leaves the southern stretches of the Serpent to the dragon, however, then the t'skrang of the central portions of the Serpent will find themselves hard pressed to defend against attacks from both sides. A few words in the right ear from a well-placed advisor could see that House K'tenshin chooses to dedicate their ships to the fight they stand a chance to win.

Aban's Goals

Aban's goals are nearly as thoroughly enshrouded in mystery as the swamps in which she makes her lair are enshrouded in mist. Though she uses her assassins as part of the network of operatives through which the dragons affect the lands of Barsaive, she has a number of personal projects that have nothing to do with the activities of the dragons as a group; it is only dragon nature, after all. Aban agrees strongly with the other great dragons on at least one point, their intent to help the Kingdom of Throal in its conflict with the Theran Empire. The following are some of Aban's goals, those which are most evident from the movements of her servants. Remember that Aban likely has more goals about which I know nothing, given the skill with which most of her servants evade detection.

Destroy the Theran Empire

Few of the great dragons would express their sentiments toward the Therans in terms of such violence and finality, but Aban's anger is a fury that only those who have lost a father might understand. She sees the destruction of the Empire as both the only answer to the antipathy between the Therans and the great dragons and the only redress for the death of her sire. She may very well prove the Therans' least forgiving enemy, for her rage and passion may drive her to continue the fight long past the point at which the other great dragons cease. As it is, I suspect that only the centuries of waiting through the Scourge taught her the patience to take a slow and ultimately more satisfying vengeance.

Guard the Secrets of Yrns Morgath

The Lost City holds many secrets that searchers have failed to pry from its dead grip, and there may be much here that even Mountainshadow does not know. Aban wishes to keep this hidden away from those who would make use of it, especially the Therans, who are always in search of new magical knowledge. Among the secrets of Yrns Morgath are the remains of Naaman Y'ross, whose return to life, were it to happen, could affect coming events in any number of ways.

Earn her Proper Place Among the Great Dragons

Though she sometimes pursues her own interests above those of her fellows, Aban wishes from the other great dragons the same respect they accord Mountainshadow, Icewing, Alamaise and the others. Though she holds no illusions





about them agreeing with everything she does or vice versa, she does wish her words to carry more weight among her brethren than they presently do.





ALAMAISE

[It comes as no surprise that the Outcast would take interest in the history of Elfbane, even though he does not see the lessons in it. Although Elfbane has not been involved in the affairs of Barsaive for centuries and has chosen not to attend our latest Councils, the Outcast considers him important enough to include in this collection. Clearly the intentions of the Outcast and those he sired extend further than taking advantage of the current conflict between Throal and the Theran Empire, and include machinations against the Blood Wood and all the rest of Barsaive as well. To our absent brother—I ask you to consider the danger this poses and call on you to aid our efforts. I hope this collection reaches you and can draw your attention away from your age-old desire for revenge to consider other important aspects of the future.]

If there is any dragon who could understand what I have accomplished, it is Alamaise. But the great dragon known as Elfbane has not been seen in Barsaive since before the Scourge. No one, not even I, knows of Alamaise's true location and plans, but I know well his history, and can imagine what the former master of Wyrm Wood desires.

Alamaise is a foreign dragon, but he has lived in the northern reaches of Barsaive for millennia. He originally hails from a distant land to the north and west of Barsaive, near the outskirts of Vasgothia, where his brother lives still. A conflict between Alamaise and his brother long ago drove Alamaise away from his original home, into the lands that became Barsaive. Alamaise and his brother hate each other and disagree on nearly every matter of consequence. Alamaise often spoke bitterly of his brother, revealing the rivalry between them. I suspect it is that rivalry which shaped Alamaise's nature.

Alamaise's Nature

Alamaise is an old dragon, one of the oldest great dragons of Barsaive. His scales are golden and red, the colors of a fiery sunset, and his tail is tipped with sharp spines. His eyes burn like pits of fire, a bright yellow, and his voice is deep and commanding. Alamaise carries himself with great pride and arrogance, even for a great dragon. He considers all others beneath him and barely worthy of his notice, including other dragons. Such pride earned him few allies among the dragons of Barsaive, but Alamaise earned their respect with his focused power and keen mind.

All dragons possess and wield great force, but Alamaise is one of the few to admit to seeking power. He has always wished to increase his own strength and to extend his rule over the land and the Young Races who inhabited it. To Alamaise, this is his right. The most powerful beings should rule and the less powerful should serve. I always imagined that his plans sprang from a desire to gather enough power to one day challenge his brother and overcome him, although the two have not fought—or even spoken to one another—in all the time Alamaise has lived in Barsaive.

His arrogance is the key to understanding Alamaise's nature. He is assured of his superiority and righteousness. No matter what mistakes he might make, Alamaise will never admit to them—but he will learn from them. Nothing scratches under his scales worse than his own flaws, and he roots out any such imperfections as quickly and ruthlessly as he would dispatch an impetuous Name-giver. If you should have to deal with Alamaise, appeal to his arrogance and use his own blindness against him. Exploit his weaknesses completely and thoroughly—for you will not get another chance—and lay the blame at the feet of his supposed allies.

Alamaise is blind in more ways than one. He is a dragon obsessed with a single goal, that of regaining control of Wyrm Wood and the elves who inhabit it. This goal drives Alamaise to the exclusion of all else. Since the death of Queen Dallia of the Elven Court, Alamaise has not been seen anywhere in Barsaive, even by his fellow dragons. Instead, he has existed in isolation, pursuing his goal. As no kingdom or city in Barsaive concerns Alamaise, apart from the Elven Court, he is not involved in the politics of nations like Throal or the Theran Empire, and so is of little concern to our immediate goals. Eventually, of course, we will have to deal with both the Blood Wood and Alamaise, but for now, so long as our plans do not impinge upon his, Alamaise is likely to ignore us.

[Elfbane, I hope this document makes clear the Outcast's intentions towards your domain. It is only a matter of time before his attention turns towards the Blood Wood, no matter what pleasantries or promises his emissaries now offer to the Elven Court. By helping deal with the Impertinent Ones and their incursion into Barsaive, you allow us to address the matter of the Outcast and his brood before they can endanger your own interests.]





On Alamaise and the Elven Court

Alamaise's involvement with the Blood Wood and the Elven Court goes back several centuries to the very origin of the place. Long ago, after he left his homeland, Alamaise settled in a verdant woodland in the north of Barsaive. He Named it Wyrm Wood and claimed it as his own domain, much as Usun is now master of the Liaj Jungle and Aban of the Mist Swamps. The elves who lived in the wood were his servants and vassals, the center of his own kingdom. It was Alamaise who convinced the Passion Jaspree to plant the seed that became Oak Heart, the living center of Wyrm Wood, and Alamaise who oversaw the growth and protection of the wood.

In time, Alamaise desired servants able to oversee the whole of his domain, and he did not consider the elves—or any of the Young Races—worthy of the task. According to their legends, Alamaise made a bargain with Jaspree and Astendar to allow him to create servants worthy of him, children born of his blood and that of the elves who made their homes within Wyrm Wood. Alamaise took elven form and mated with elven women to bring forth the first of these servants. The first born was Named Caynreth, the First Listener of Harmony spoken of in elven legend. Others followed and became the founders of the Elven Court, the center of elven culture. In this way Alamaise wove the first threads of Wyrm Wood's pattern and laid the foundation of elven civilization as it is now known.

Alamaise taught his children that they were superior to other Name-givers, for they had the blood of great dragons in their veins. However, Alamaise stifled the greatness of his children, rather than encouraging them to reach their true potential, as I have done with you. He failed to encourage their greatness, and so instilled a streak of rebellion in them. (Or perhaps elves cannot help but be treacherous and Alamaise's progeny fell victim to the elven side of their heritage.)

In time, the Children of Alamaise rebelled against him. First in small ways, by shaping elven culture and belief towards their own ends, then in greater acts of betrayal, including stealing magical lore from their creator. Eventually, there was open rebellion everywhere and towards the end of the Age of Dragons, the Children of Alamaise led other Name-givers to overthrow the rule of the dragon overlords. Alamaise himself was grievously wounded by Caynreth, his first daughter. Rather than destroy all he had created, Alamaise fled Wyrm Wood for another lair, where he slept for thousands of years, from the end of the Age of Dragons to the beginning of this Age, all the while slowly healing his wounds, out of the reach of his traitorous children. When last I saw him, long before the Scourge, Alamaise still bore a livid scar upon his breast, and burning hatred for the Elven Court.

It is for this reason that the great dragons forbid the mating of any dragon with the Young Races. They feared the greatness they saw in their wayward children during the rebellion, because they did not understand how much we could achieve together. Rather than encourage greatness, they sought to create mediocrity and mindless servitude.

When he had recovered from the wounds he suffered during the rebellion, Alamaise sent servants to Wyrm Wood to discover what had become of it in the centuries that had passed. His children had built up the Elven Court and established a line of Queens to rule the Wood. Alamaise confronted the Queen Dallia along the road north of Wyrm Wood as she traveled to the elven nation of Shosara. He demanded that her people swear fealty to him again, as creator and master of Wyrm Wood. When Dallia arrogantly opposed him, Alamaise destroyed her and many of her entourage. Enough of them survived to return to Wyrm Wood and tell the tale. Naturally, the people of the Elven Nations knew nothing of their true history, nor the reasons for Alamaise's attack. They knew only that their Queen had been killed by a great dragon. From that time on, Alamaise was known by the Name Elfbane among his own kind, and the Elven Court and the dragons of Barsaive have been deadly enemies in public, as well as in secret.

In many ways, the Elven Court and the surviving Children of Alamaise are like your distant cousins, my children. They have the power of dragons, but they are treacherous and thankless. They betrayed their heritage and turned their backs on their sire. Never trust them and always beware of them.

[It is interesting that the Outcast portrays the events of the creation and ultimate rebellion of the Children as having to do with Elfbane alone. Surely he remembers, and chooses to obfuscate, our participation in these events. The Children of the Dragons do not belong solely to Elfbane. They are all our children, errant though they may be. Indeed, if it weren't for the disaster which followed the rebellion, the Outcast's later actions might never have led to his exile. I wonder why he has chosen to portray these events in this light? Why would he keep the truth from his children?]





Alamaise's Powers

Alamaise was a dragon of great power and knowledge, and I highly doubt time has dulled his powers. If anything, they have likely increased in the centuries since he was last active in Barsaive. Alamaise is old and strong, with mighty claws and teeth. His scales in particular are quite strong, able to ward off any weapon with ease and nigh-impossible to penetrate, even for the talons or flames of another dragon. Still, his First Daughter did strike him a terrible wound using the magic at her command. I suspect the wound inflicted by Caynreth may have weakened Alamaise's armor, leaving a scar which could be more vulnerable than his other armor. Although a slim chance, should you ever be faced with the anger of Alamaise, you must seize every opportunity.

Alamaise knows a great deal of magic, particularly elementalism. He was a master of the element of wood, and is quite adept at encouraging growth and molding greenery to suit his needs. The fantastic palaces and wooden structures of the Elven Court began as seeds in the mind of Alamaise, who taught the elves the arts of wood-shaping and elemental magic. His skill with the other elements is nearly as great: in his day, Alamaise diverted rivers, carved mountains and commanded the rain and the lightning. All of the beasts of Wyrn Wood were his to command as well. He occasionally took on different forms, including various Name-givers and forest beasts.

The greatest power Alamaise possessed was taken from him by Queen Alachia and the magicians of the Elven Court. As the Namer and maker of Wyrn Wood, Alamaise had many threads woven to the Wood's True Pattern. Within the bounds of Wyrn Wood, Alamaise was supremely powerful and no dragon would even think of challenging him on his home ground. His threads also strengthened the pattern and defenses of the Wood, giving it a special magic and sustaining it, even after the rebellion forced him to abandon it.

Perhaps the Elven Queen Alachia believed the magic and the ancient protections woven by Alamaise would preserve Wyrn Wood against the Scourge. Perhaps she is merely touched with the same arrogance as Alamaise, unable to admit error on her part. For whatever reason, the Elven Court refused the protection of Theran magic and decided to turn the living trees of Wyrn Wood into a barrier against the Horrors.

During the Scourge, the Elven Court's wooden kaer failed. In a desperate attempt to save themselves, the elves used powerful magic to alter the True Pattern of Wyrn Wood itself. The Ritual of the Thorns transformed the elves living in the wood into blood elves, their skin pierced with thorns dripping blood. More importantly, the Ritual transformed Wyrn Wood into the Blood Wood. With its True Pattern reshaped, the threads woven to the wood by Alamaise were cut and the great dragon's last connection to his former domain was severed.

Since the Scourge, I have heard only rumors of Alamaise. It would seem the former master of Wyrn Wood has been taken aback by the transformation of his realm. Although Alamaise could reclaim the Blood Wood, doing so would likely require powerful ritual magic, the likes of which haven't been practiced by great dragons since the Age of Dragons. Alamaise's desire to reclaim the Blood Wood may be strong, but he would never face exile and violate dragon tradition in this manner. Even if he did choose to reclaim the forest, would it even be worth reclaiming a domain that is corrupt and dying? I suspect Alamaise has delayed his plans in order to investigate the transformation of Wyrn Wood, to study the new pattern of the Blood Wood and understand its complexities. He watches and waits before deciding his next move in the game.

Alamaise's Lair

I cannot say for certain where Alamaise currently lairs. I do know his lair lies somewhere north of the Blood Wood, between it and Shosara, and it is likely closer to the Blood Wood than any of the elves there imagine. The mountains to the northeast of the wood are the most likely candidates. Some deep cave or forested valley in the region may serve as Alamaise's hiding place, where he plots the downfall of the Elven Court and considers his plans in secret. Wherever his lair lies, it is certainly protected and hidden by powerful magic. I do know that Alamaise has a finely tuned lair-sense. Entering his lair without his knowledge is no easy task.

I am sure the Elven Court in particular would pay dearly to know the location of Alamaise's lair. It is information worth knowing, and I recommend investigating it by tracking some of Alamaise's known servants, such as his lesser drakes. They might lead you back to their master's lair. From there, we might endeavor to gain possession of some of Alamaise's treasures and Pattern Items, then perhaps turn the information over to our elven "allies" to strengthen their trust in us.





Tread softly in dealing with Alamaise. We do not want to draw his anger on us while dealing with so many other plans in Barsaive. For now, Alamaise is no concern of ours. If you can learn more about his plans without risk to your own, then do so, but do not risk everything to learn more about him now.

Treasures

As a great dragon, Alamaise possesses vast treasure, but his most valuable possessions are linked to his interest in the Blood Wood. Since he created Wyrms Wood, Alamaise undoubtedly holds Pattern Items linked to its old True Pattern. Though Wyrms Wood is gone, such Pattern Items may still hold power, and may also be important keys to unlocking the present secrets of the Blood Wood. Alamaise is most certainly using them to study and unveil the wood's new pattern, and it is a possibility that some of these items have become Pattern Items for the Blood Wood itself. If he holds no Pattern Items for the Blood Wood at present, he is surely working towards acquiring them. The Elven Court would pay dearly to learn of such things, and would pay anything to possess such items—though they are much more useful in our hands, they would serve as intriguing bait.

Even more important than the Pattern Items of the wood, Alamaise may possess Pattern Items belonging to members of the Elven Court, perhaps even Alachia herself. The elves would most certainly be interested in retrieving such lost items, as surely as Alamaise would be eager to acquire more. This provides ample opportunities to set the two against each other, even if only by ruse and deception.

Alamaise understands Wyrms Wood better than any being. Such knowledge would be invaluable in dealing with the Elven Court, and would reveal weaknesses we could exploit. If nothing else, proof of the true history of Wyrms Wood could sunder the already quarreling elven nations and divide the Court, making them easy prey. Alachia and her cousins will pay dearly to keep their dirty secrets hidden from their subjects.

Other treasures in Alamaise's possession include ancient elven artifacts (created by the first magicians and artisans of Wyrms Wood), a vast collection of elven lore and history, and other precious materials taken from the wood before Alamaise was forced to leave it. I suspect he also hoards treasures brought from the distant land he first called home.

Servants

Once, Alamaise had many servants, an entire nation at his command. Now, it is difficult to say for sure who or what serves Alamaise except for one certainty: stung by the rebellion of his children, Alamaise trusts no other Name-giver. All of the great dragon's personal servants are mindless beasts, or nearly so—creatures without ambition or betrayal in their hearts. They are also just as incapable of greatness and brilliance. It is sad to see a great dragon the likes of Alamaise surrounding himself with such pets when he could have achieved so much.

Since he once mastered the creatures of Wyrms Wood, I am sure Alamaise has many beasts as his spies and agents, using the power of dragonspeech to command them and utilize their senses. Some of the most innocent-appearing creatures of the Blood Wood may serve as Alamaise's eyes and ears, while many of the more savage beasts may serve as his soldiers.

Lesser Drakes

The other personal servants Alamaise can call upon are his drakes, a variation on the drakes used by other dragons. Called "false drakes" by the elves of the Blood Wood, these drakes are more appropriately called lesser drakes, although what Alamaise Named them is unknown. They appear identical to other drakes—small dragon-like creatures, perhaps as much as nine feet long.

Unlike true drakes, lesser drakes cannot take Name-giver form, nor are they as intelligent as Name-givers. Lesser drakes are more like beasts, which seems to suit Alamaise and his distrust of all Name-givers. Rather than admit his mistakes with his earlier progeny, Alamaise chose to limit the abilities of his new servants. This shows the same short-sightedness I spoke of before, which may prove to be Alamaise's undoing.

The lesser drakes serve primarily as Alamaise's spies in the Blood Wood. They have been seen nowhere else (which is not the same as saying they have not been anywhere else). The blood elves have spotted lesser drakes soaring through the trees of the Blood Wood from time to time, perhaps as a warning from Alamaise to let them know he is watching. The lesser drakes seem to share their master's sadness over the corruption and transformation of Wyrms Wood,





as the few blood elves who have encountered them report feeling a great melancholy afterwards. I believe the feeling is only a shadow-echo of the sorrow Alamaise feels over the loss of his home.

Name-givers

While Alamaise does not trust other Name-givers, it does not mean that he has no Name-givers serving his interests in Barsaive. It is not necessary to trust someone to get them to do your bidding, particularly if you are as skillful and patient as a great dragon. Alamaise, working behind the scenes, may pull the strings of many Name-givers who are completely unaware that they serve the interests of the sworn enemy of the Elven Court.

The most likely candidates to be Alamaise's unwitting agents are those Name-givers opposed in one way or another to the Blood Wood. Living legend cults, such as the Seekers of the Heart, may be influenced by Alamaise, acting as pawns in his game. Various adventurers may be in the employ of Alamaise as well. He is surely as capable of assuming Name-giver form as before (no matter how distasteful he might consider it). This would allow him to hire Name-giver agents in many different forms to serve his needs.

Allies and Enemies

Alamaise cultivates no allies among dragonkind. For centuries he has chosen isolation as he develops his plans. He barely speaks with his fellow dragons, does not attend Councils called by them and has taken no eggs into his care since long before the Scourge. The other great dragons prefer to avoid the Blood Wood and the Elven Court as much as possible. They do not interfere in the Court's affairs, with the unspoken agreement that Alachia and her subjects do not interfere with them. So far, the agreement seems to have held, but great resentment and distrust simmers just below the surface on both sides. It would not take much to fan such embers into a fire to consume the Blood Wood, one or more dragons, or both. Consider the possibilities of such a plan.

Alamaise considers his enemies clear: his wayward progeny and their elven subjects. Elfbane intends to remain true to his Name, to punish the Elven Court for their effrontery and take back control of the Blood Wood. Perhaps he also intends to find a means to restore the wood to its former nature and True Pattern, if such a thing is possible. I know Alamaise will reach no peaceful agreement with the Elven Court, nor will he allow any being to stand in the way of his rightful revenge.

Although we are alike in some ways, I believe Alamaise would consider me an enemy. He was not among the Council which exiled me, but I am sure Alamaise would see what I have done as an insult to him, a repetition of the foolish mistakes he and his fellow dragons made centuries ago. Rather than admit that I have accomplished what he could not, Alamaise would certainly see me destroyed. As much as any other dragon (if not more so), Alamaise will consider you abominations. Do not think otherwise, my children. You will find no sympathy for our goals with him.

Despite his attitudes, remember that Alamaise is ultimately obsessed with his own goal. I believe he would make any alliance to gain control of the Blood Wood, including allying with us, if it were to his advantage. We are the lesser concern by far in his eyes, and that is a fine position to hold, for now.

[Elfbane, I hope you would not consider defying the dictates of our Council by allying yourself with the Outcast or his children. You know better than any other their treacherous nature, and you know what a threat they pose to us all.]

Alamaise's Goals

Although Alamaise's goals appear simple on the surface, they are multi-layered and sometimes contradictory. Consider them carefully and how they can be turned to serve our needs. In particular, note that Alamaise's goals do not run along the lines of his fellow dragons, and may even be made to run counter to them. His isolation from dragonkind can work in our favor. I believe Alamaise is more likely than other dragon to defy the dictates of culture and custom to achieve his goals.

Watch the Activities of His Brother

Although I have not spoken with Alamaise for centuries, I am certain he continues to watch and follow the activities of his brother, as their rivalry has been a driving force for Alamaise since he was young. In truth, Alamaise's





quest to regain control of the Blood Wood and punish the Elven Court is only a small gambit in the larger game he plays against his brother. There are plots within plots where great dragons are concerned, and knowledge of Alamaise's vendetta may help illuminate certain actions that you would not understand otherwise. If Alamaise proves problematic, his brother can be used as a diversion, and may possibly even be a useful ally.

Guard and Protect the Blood Wood

While he despises the blood elves, Alamaise loves his memories of Wyrm Wood and seems determined to make it live again. He does not want to see the Blood Wood destroyed, but restored, so he protects it after a fashion and will allow no further harm to come to it. In an ironic twist, Alamaise may find himself protecting the Elven Court from outside threats which could interfere with his plans. Though they are locked in a struggle, the Elven Court and Alamaise share a mutual desire to protect the wood.

Alamaise's protectiveness is one of the reasons I recommended a treaty with the Blood Wood, to allay the great dragon's concerns as well as those of Alachia and her court. Alamaise will not consider you important as long as you do not threaten his former home. If you do decide to break your agreement with the Elven Court and take the Blood Wood, you will have to deal with Alamaise first. He is far more dangerous than Alachia and all of her courtiers combined.

Study the Pattern of the Blood Wood

If he wishes to control and restore the Blood Wood, Alamaise must carefully study its pattern. Even the greatest elven magicians have not entirely unraveled the secrets of their home's new True Pattern, and Alamaise does not have the direct experience with its changes as they do. However, a great dragon is far more knowledgeable about the nature of True Patterns than any elven magician, and Alamaise has been studying the Blood Wood since its very creation. He may already have discovered useful things regarding its pattern. Once he completely understands it, I am confident Alamaise will take some action, with or without the consent of our fellow great dragons. We must be prepared for that day, which could come at any time. As formidable an enemy as the Elven Court may be, they are nothing compared to the threat of a new Wyrm Wood under Alamaise's rule.

Undermine the Elven Court

To further his plans, Alamaise surely works to undermine the power of the Elven Court through subtle manipulations behind the scenes. Weakening the power of Alachia and her courtiers is crucial to his larger goals.

These operations against the Elven Court must be conducted under great secrecy, since I know of no agents in direct service of Alamaise. Most likely, he backs groups such as the Seekers of the Heart, who wish to restore the Blood Wood, and anyone else opposed to Alachia or the Elven Court. He may have contacts in Shosara and other elven lands to help serve his interests. Perhaps the Shosaran ambassador Jorealla has some hidden ties to Alamaise, or he may have his claws sunk into the t'skrang House Syrtis, who also have dealings with the Blood Wood. These Name-givers are likely unaware that they are being supported and influenced by Alamaise himself, the great enemy of elvenkind, and most would no doubt be horrified if they knew the truth. Our agents in various secret societies must remain alert for signs of any link to Alamaise and his plans.

Reclaim Wyrm Wood

This is Alamaise's ultimate goal. Once all of the pieces are in place, I am certain Alamaise will act to destroy or enslave the members of the Elven Court who opposed him, and reassert his control over the whole of the Blood Wood. Then he can begin to rebuild the domain he lost so long ago. Alamaise must never be successful, as he will become a powerful rival to your rightful rule of Barsaive. He will not remain content with taking the Blood Wood for long, and will soon turn his attention to the rest of Barsaive, including Iopos. That is why Alamaise's plans should be encouraged only so far. You must play the Elven Court and the great dragon off each other as expertly as you have Throal and Thera. Strike a balance where they will weaken each other, allowing you to finish off the wounded victor with ease.





THE MATED PAIR, ASANTE AND NIGHTSKY

[I suspect that many of you will be as surprised as I was to find Asante and Nightsky included in this work. As they are mere adult dragons, I couldn't fathom their significance to the Outcast. This is particularly true when a number of their brethren are older, wiser and wield considerably more influence over the Young Races, as well as within dragon society.

Despite my initial puzzlement at the Outcast's decision to include Asante and Nightsky along with the great dragons of Barsaive, the Outcast clearly has disturbing reasons behind his interest in these two adult dragons, not the least of which is to draw our attention, in particular, to them. As you'll read, the Outcast cites information which, if true, could have grave implications. I have already begun a quiet effort to confirm the accuracy of this report. If the Outcast's claims are valid, then we must consider an appropriate response. Clearly, however, we must handle the matter on our own terms, and not in a manner dictated by the Outcast for his benefit.]

Throughout these documents I describe the strength and power of the greatest dragons in Barsaive. I have described their wealth, their servants, their society and relations with one another, all of this with an eye toward giving you the knowledge you need to defeat them.

Through the entirety of these discussions I have stressed the importance of not underestimating the power and might of dragonkind. But while I have focused primarily on Barsaive's great dragons, do not heed my advice any less for those dragons you know as adult "common" dragons. The word is a misnomer, and aside from invoking the wrath of any dragon called such, the word also has serious consequences to any who are foolish enough to believe the implications. The strength and power of these dragons is still considerable, well beyond the capabilities of the Young Races to tackle in direct confrontation. Though physically, mentally, and politically less powerful than their great elders, do not underestimate their cunning and do not ignore their usefulness as a tool in your struggle. The great dragons of Barsaive often disregard them, and their lesser status in our society may give you an opening to take advantage of—if you are careful.

If dragon society is bound together by the chains of tradition and ritual, then the best place to break that chain—unraveling the culture and spreading discord—is its weakest link. For dragons this link may be the only pair of adult western dragons in Barsaive to remain as mates and partners after breeding: Asante and Nightsky.

An Unusual Bonding

While potentially interesting, the mating customs of dragons are difficult to explain and I will not endeavor to describe them here. It is sufficient to state that it is quite unusual for a pair of dragons to remain together after mating, and even more unusual for that pair to remain together once their clutch of eggs has been laid and sent to one or more of the great dragons for hatching and subsequent education. However, despite the unorthodox nature of this behavior, it is exactly what these two dragons have done. It is unusual enough that when I first learned of these two I began to look for a motive, and I believe that I have found it. The truth behind the matter is a situation that you can exploit to aid your plans for Barsaive.

The essence of the pair's motive, which should become clear by the end of this document, and what makes these two dragons most vulnerable, is their youth and inexperience. Asante and Nightsky are rebellious, immature and naïve. This is particularly true of Nightsky, whose youthful aggression makes him an easy target for your manipulations. He was raised by Usun, in isolation from the other authority of other great dragons, and has not yet matured to the point where he does not rankle under their command. For her part, Asante is possessed of what you might call compassion for the Young Races, as well as a terrible feeling of guilt and anger over events from before the Scourge where she had conflicts with several great dragons. This anger has led her to take actions that can only lead to her downfall, as you will soon see.

Your role is to orchestrate events that trigger the paired dragons' anger and frustrations such that they suspect their fellow dragons of taking actions counter to their own goals and desires. Do this properly and you may have your first pawns in your struggle against the dragons. However, to manipulate a being as powerful as a dragon, you first need to understand the individual and the motivation. Thus I begin with some history.





Nightsky, the Youngest Adult Dragon

Nightsky is the youngest adult dragon I know of in Barsaive today, having emerged from his astral cocoon just two years before Throal sealed itself from the world. Nightsky was the last hatchling of Usun's to emerge before the Scourge. His few brothers and sisters who remained in their cocoons after that year were destroyed by astral Horrors.

Physically, Nightsky is very large for a dragon of his young age, nearly 75 feet long. He is jet black in color with flecks of silver on the tips of his scales and horns. This coloration gives the effect of stars on a moonless night, a key factor in his choosing his Name. His natural coloration also led Nightsky to favor nocturnal hunting, and on clear starlit nights, he moves all but undetected through the region of the Caucavic Mountains that he and Asante claim as their lair.

Nightsky awoke from his cocoon impatient and eager to take on the world, as young whelps usually are. He entered adulthood just as the Scourge began in earnest, and did not have time to construct a proper dragon lair, so he was forced to seek shelter with another dragon. Having arrived too late to remain with his sire Usun, he was fortunate enough to find shelter under the Throal Mountains, where Earthroot took him in. His impatience made the time of hiding particularly long and torturous, preventing him from entering the shal-mora as most dragons did during the Long Night. Eventually he could wait no more and left his shelter soon after the Scourge had ended, being one of the first Name-givers to look upon the Scourge-ravaged landscape of Barsaive. Even for a dragon this act was a foolish risk, as many powerful Horrors still roamed the world. Though Nightsky would surely deny it, I believe it was fortune rather than physical prowess that kept the whelp alive.

Mountainshadow, in his research concerning the Scourge, once interviewed Nightsky about his experiences traveling across Barsaive and beyond in the years immediately following the Scourge. I obtained a small portion of this work, and I include an interesting passage for your reference.

It was the fourteenth year after I left Earthroot's lair (1419 TH). I had traveled across Barsaive and into a series of desolate lands far to the south, below what is currently the Theran province of Creana in Fekara. Dusk approached, and I was about to set down for a brief rest when a brilliant flash lit up the horizon. In the distance a burning airship was desperately fighting for its life with a pair of massive flying Horrors. As this was the first sign I had seen of surviving Name-givers, I took wing to investigate and possibly give aid.

As I approached the vessel, I saw the flag of Throal burning along with the sails and much of the deck. Everything the Horrors touched turned to flame. Despite the inferno the crew was fighting bravely, showing no sign of yielding to their foe. I attacked one of the Horrors from above with my own fire, driving it away from the ship, but not before it returned the favor and flamed me. Its fire burnt, like nothing I had ever felt before, but it was no match for my power and after a short struggle it fell to the ground lifeless.

As I turned back to the ship for the other Horror, I saw the troll who was leading the fight on the ship, wearing spectacular living crystal armor, throw the contents of an orichalcum-lined box into the great maw of the terror. As what I can only imagine were kernels of True air came into contact with the creature's fire, they detonated, and a tremendous explosion rocked the valley and echoed off distant mountains. The explosion decimated the Horror, and cracked the mast, nearly tearing it from the ship and killing several crewmen, eventually forcing the ship to the ground.

I include this passage to reinforce the idea that even the youngest dragons are more than a match for the largest and most powerful opponents. The years he spent traveling the world after the Scourge have made Nightsky particularly fearsome in combat for his age. However, if properly focused this youth's aggression can be a powerful weapon against your enemies.

[I recall this interview with Nightsky. What the Outcast has omitted here is that the ship described was in fact the Earthdawn, the Throalic ship captained by Vaare Longfang and tasked to make contact with the various nations of Barsaive after the Scourge. According to rumor and legends it was lost to the Horrors, but this tale, as well as other evidence, suggests otherwise.

Later on in this same discussion, Nightsky informed me that he encountered the Earthdawn once again, this time far from Fekara, still airborne thanks to haphazard and jury-rigged repairs. I am not certain what has prevented the ship from returning to Barsaive, and the ship's ultimate fate is a subject I hope to pursue once our affairs with the Impertinent Ones are concluded.]





Asante's Nature

While substantially older than her mate, Asante's age of eight-hundred years is still very young by dragon standards. In contrast to Nightsky, Asante's coloration is an unusual creamy white, with a much darker tint on her horns and claws. Among dragons she is considered exceptionally beautiful.

Asante's main flaw is that her youth leaves her naïve and unwilling to recognize the power that dragon blood gives her over weaker races. Indeed, her fondness for the Young Races became a weakness that was exploited by cunning Name-givers in her youth, and which later forced her into dissension with her elders. Over the years, she has become more self-righteous in her attitudes, and thus still vulnerable to manipulation.

In addition to her naiveté, Asante does not have the vast resources possessed by many other dragons, even those of her age. Much of her wealth has gone to aiding and supporting Name-givers in need—mostly victims of Horrors—and she rarely sees a return on her investments. Her preoccupation with Name-giver affairs has replaced drives common in other dragons, specifically the hoarding of wealth and accumulation of influence and power. Her attention is devoted to more ephemeral things, and thus unlikely to be suspicious of well-laid plans.

Asante's Ties with the Young Races

Asante was born into the clutch of the great dragon Redwing, a Name not often spoken since the Scourge, and one that is likely unknown to you. Redwing once ruled the Cauvavic Mountains, and given his stature as a great dragon, was both powerful and confident, perhaps overly so. His arrogance ultimately proved to be his undoing.

During Asante's youth, she befriended a number of the dwarfs who lived in the dwarf city of Draoglin, in the ancient kingdom of Scythia. Though she had been taught that the Scythia Mountains were the domain of Thermail, her youthful interest in the Young Races won over her better judgment, and she maintained contact with these dwarfs. Redwing chose to ignore this, thinking Asante would quickly grow bored before any harm was done. Unfortunately, he was wrong, and a band of greedy adepts, lured by stories of Redwing's fabulous wealth (from Asante's own mouth), followed Asante back to Redwing's lair, hoping to slay the great dragon and lay claim to his hoard. Though powerful, the group was no match for the might of a great dragon, and the dwarfs were slain soon after they attempted to penetrate Redwing's lair. Their knowledge of the lair did not die with them, however, and soon other foolish adept groups tried their hand at raiding Redwing's abode. Thermail heard of these assaults, and reproached Redwing for allowing Asante to rile the dwarfs up. In anger Redwing banished Asante to the wild and sparsely populated eastern spur of the Cauvavic Mountains, where it stretches down towards the Aras Sea. Alone during her adolescence and transformation into adulthood, Asante longed to return to the home of her sire.

When Asante reached adulthood she returned to Redwing's lair, with every intention of apologizing to both her sire and to Thermail for her breach of dragon tradition and protocols. But upon her arrival she was met by not only Redwing, but also Vasdenjas (who had claimed the Scythia Mountains after the death of Thermail) and Icewing. The trio accepted her Rite of Transgression, but Vasdenjas did invoke the Stricture of Forbidden Domain, prohibiting Asante from interacting with the inhabitants of Scythia.

Asante's fascination with the Young Races was too compelling, however, and it was not long before she acted in defiance of her sire and against the orders of Vasdenjas and Icewing. The Scourge was fast approaching, and tensions were running high between the dragons and the Therans, who were angered at dragons like Vasdenjas who were freely distributing the Rites of Protection and Passage. The Therans countered Vasdenjas in particular by agitating among the Scythian dwarfs to defy and attack him. Asante became embroiled in the affair, and became so enraged with the Therans that she ate a fair number of them. The news of this fueled the Theran cause, and they quickly had the Scythian city of Gateway up in arms against the dragons.

When Redwing learned that Asante had disobeyed once again, he sought her out in the Scythia Mountains, and alerted Vasdenjas to Asante's defiance of her elders. But before he was able to find Asante, Redwing was set upon by one of the earliest and most insidious of the Horrors to attack the ancient dwarf kingdom. I have never encountered the likes of this (as yet unNamed) Horror, nor have I heard of it attacking anywhere else in the world save Scythia. Whether the kingdom held some unique interest for this Horror I cannot say. I do know that even the mighty Redwing was unable to withstand the onslaught of the Horror that attacked him, and he fell in battle. Soon after Redwing died to protect them, the Scythian dwarfs of Gateway launched an attack upon Vasdenjas (as elsewhere, the Therans attacked Cloudtamer, Yuichotol, and Icewing).





Learning of Redwing's death, Asante sought out Vasdenjas, to seek help in aiding the dwarfs of Scythia against the Horror that had slain her sire. Having just been betrayed by the dwarfs of Gateway, Vasdenjas cared not for their fate, and Asante found herself alone, completely unprepared to battle the Horror, and unable to stop it from devouring the dwarfs she had so desperately hoped to save.

Most of the surviving dwarfs who fled Scythia headed for the Throal Mountains, but a few went to the Cauvavic Mountains, hoping to mine enough orichalcum to seal their great dwarf cities before the true onslaught of the Horrors began. Asante traveled to the Cauvavics with these dwarfs, acting as a guardian and advisor, planning on providing them with the knowledge they would need to build suitable shelters against the Horrors. Shortly after arriving, Mountainshadow visited her, telling her of the recent "arrangement" made with the Therans that the dragons of Barsaive would not share their protective secrets with the Young Races. Unwilling to accept her word that she would not interfere, he ordered her into her own lair early. Angry, but unwilling to confront Mountainshadow, Asante retreated into her lair, to wait out the Long Night of the Scourge, while the dwarfs she'd hoped to protect were left on their own at the mercy of the Horrors.

After the Scourge

When Asante emerged from her kaer after the Scourge, she discovered that most of the Scythan dwarfs' kaers had been breached and devastated by the Horrors. I have heard stories that she flew into a rage, and sought to destroy one of the villages Mountainshadow had protected in violation of his own agreement. That Asante is still alive testifies that she did not carry through with her plan. She feels guilty that she was prevented from providing the assistance she knew the dwarfs needed, and angry at the cowardice of the great dragon Council and its dealings with the Therans.

Asante's anger may be your best weapon against the dragons. She almost attacked Mountainshadow once, and I do not believe it would take much to push Asante over the edge to betray the rest of her kind. However, you must be careful to orchestrate her betrayal carefully, as it is a one-time opportunity, and if you fail to take the advantage you will lose a valuable pawn.

On the Pair's Lair and Allies

As stated previously, Asante and Nightsky currently make their home in the Cauvavic Mountains, within a vast network of caves located in the Northern Valley. Asante has set aside a portion of this valley as a shelter for a small number (perhaps a few dozen) of Horror-scarred individuals she has found in some of the lost kaers in both the Cauvavic and Scythia Mountains. These lost souls support themselves on a small farm hidden at the far end of the valley, and Asante harbors them in the vain hope of protecting them from themselves and society while she works to free them of the ties that bind their minds. Despite her noble efforts, I believe that she has yet to successfully save any of her refugees.

At this time the pair has two groups of Name-givers that might be called allies. The first are the members of a semi-retired adventuring group Named "the Seven of Thystonius." This group of adepts were instrumental in Nightsky's courting of Asante, leading to the two dragons' first (and thus far only) mating over ten years ago. In the years following, this group has carried out several tasks at the behest of the pair and they religiously spread tales of the two dragons in an obvious attempt to grow the dragons' legend. In recent years the group has for the most part retired, and are only occasionally called upon by the dragons.

The free trading company known as the Dream Spire Company, based in Bartertown, constitutes the pairs' other ally. Though the origins of the relationship are unknown to me, Asante and Nightsky have granted Dream Spire exclusive permission to use the shortest and safest airship route through the Cauvavic Mountains, one that passes unusually close to the dragons' lair. This pass is a significant link between the cities of Throal and Haven (and Parlainth), one that allows for frequent and fast transport of trade goods between the two cities. Given their abilities as dragons, Nightsky and Asante can effectively shut down airship and caravan traffic through the mountains, forcing caravans to travel around the mountains to reach Haven. If you were to establish an alliance with them (or control over them), you would control this link. This could provide you with the opportunity to recover magic items and knowledge obtained from the ruins of Parlainth, which could then be smuggled back to Iopos, without the knowledge of the dwarfs or the dragons who would oppose you.

The Dream Spire Company has also recently paid a substantial amount for the dragons' knowledge of routes and travel conditions outside the boundaries of Barsaive—presumably they are seeking to open additional trade routes to foreign lands. You may be able to use what knowledge you have of the lands beyond Barsaive as a bartering tool with the Dream Spire Company, or to gain an introduction and audience with the two dragons themselves. Once you have an audience, the next step is to charm your way into their trust and supplant one of your trading companies as their





ally, thus taking effective control of trade through the pass. As both Asante and Nightsky support the dragons' efforts against Thera, you may be able to use the Dream Spire Company's opposition to the war to drive a wedge between them and the pair. Some manufactured evidence of Dream Spire's involvement with the Theran slave trade would only facilitate the matter. If you move carefully you can accomplish this without anyone being aware of your involvement in what looks to the world like a minor trade struggle.

On the Current Activities of Asante and Nightsky

Once you have gained their trust and what strategic advantage you can, you will need leverage to bend the dragons to your will. If my sources are correct, Asante and Nightsky have provided you with the perfect lever.

Asante laid her first clutch of eggs a few years ago, a small clutch of only two eggs. The two dragons made the unusual choice of sending each of those to a different great dragon for rearing. One of the eggs went to Earthroot, the other went to Aban in the Mist Swamps. Earthroot was chosen for his strong relationships to the t'skrang that live with him under Throal. It is Asante's hope that these relationships will give the young dragon born from her egg the contact with other Name-givers that she values so highly. The reasons for choosing Aban are less clear.

More importantly, I have reason to believe that Asante actually laid three eggs, and that Asante intends to conceal the remaining one from the great dragons, raising it herself. This is an opportunity that provides many possible advantages in your dealings with the dragons. The fact that you know of the hidden egg at all gives you leverage against both Asante and the great dragons. Asante and Nightsky will go to great lengths to conceal and protect it, and if the great dragons learn of the egg, the internal strife caused in dragon society might well distract them long enough to allow you freedom to move forward with other plans. A well timed informant's visit to one of the great dragons might even lead to a temporary ally, or at least a favor being owed. This informant's connection to you would have to be carefully camouflaged, but his position would be invaluable to your cause.

It is my opinion that Asante has kept the egg as an act of defiance towards the great dragons. She likely thinks of herself as capable of instructing her offspring in the ways of the world, as she survived on her own at an unusually young age. It is unclear why Nightsky has gone along with this plan, but it is probably out of his interest in Asante. Asante and Nightsky were drawn to each other because of their lonely youths and rebellious natures. They are both of fiery spirit, and undoubtedly feed off each other's energy, isolated as they are from any calming influences. This terrible secret has now bound them together even more tightly against the great dragons.

Ponder this situation carefully, and take note of the risk that Asante and Nightsky have put their egg in by keeping it themselves. Most dragon eggs are carefully hidden and guarded by a great dragon, protected by drakes and magic and trusted servants. This pair does not have the resources of a great dragon, and are much more vulnerable to outsiders. They cannot possibly provide constant protection for their egg, and they are both naïve and easily manipulated, putting the egg at even greater risk. Informing outside parties of this situation may lead to the egg's capture by the Therans, dragon hunters, or perhaps even the Cult of the Great Hunter. If the Therans were inspired to steal the egg, Asante and Nightsky could easily be provoked into taking premature action against the Therans, perhaps triggering the war you have been preparing for, before either side is ready.

On the other hand, consider the potential effects if an ally of the dragons were to steal the eggs. A rift between Throal, or one of its allies, and the dragons would solidify your position and fracture Throal's growing power base. The many opportunities here are obvious, you need only seize them.

[These are the allegations to which I referred in my opening comments. Though I don't want to believe these claims are true, much of the Outcast's other information is correct, giving the accusation validity. However, while Asante and Nightsky may indeed have kept one of their eggs to raise themselves, the Outcast has made at least one factual error concerning the pair's eggs. Their clutch did indeed consist of at least three eggs, and aside from the eggs delivered to Mistweaver and Root Protector, I know that Nightsky insisted that the third egg be given to his sire Vast Green. In any event, we must take action to verify and correct this situation swiftly, lest the young dragons' egg fall into the wrong hands.]





CHARCOALGRIN

[This report reminds me of what Charcoalgrin was like before the Scourge—clever, intelligent, indeed one of the few dragons who cared one whit about the Young Races and their short lives. But always, always a talker.]

The Outcast raises some interesting questions about Charcoalgrin's current allegiances and motivations. If we are to believe this report, she may be financing the dwarf kingdom's military efforts against Thera. She may also be seeking for a way to return Parlainth to its hidden plane. She may be a heartsick dragon, or she may be as greedy and acquisitive as the rest of us. If the first of these is true, it is a testimony to Charcoalgrin's guile and cunning that we learn of this here. This is especially true for both Doll-Maker and Root Protector, both of whom have their talons deep in the hide of the dwarf's kingdom.

As to these mysterious "missing vessels" which the Outcast describes, I must confess a certain disquieting sensation upon learning that Parlainth holds yet more secrets. If what the Outcast says is true—about not only these vessels but also about Charcoalgrin's relationship with Eyripemes—we might wish to consider calling Charcoalgrin before a Council to explain herself in this matter. It appears her involvement with the Therans and Parlainth far exceeds what is acceptable, and she must be held accountable.]

Like most of her kind, Charcoalgrin is arrogant to a fault. By sequestering herself in the moldering ruins of Parlainth, the dragon has assured that she will forever be the biggest fish in a very small pond. Other dragons view her a little more than an eccentric, content to play with the Young Races and creatures who gather 'neath her tattered wings.

It is important that you realize Charcoalgrin is not a great dragon, but merely another of only a few adults I will describe to you. Most adult dragons are of little consequence to your plans, and you need not overly concern yourselves with them. Charcoalgrin, however, is different. Her past involvement with the Therans in Parlainth is enough to warrant our attention, for any dragon willing to defy the Council of great dragons once may well be willing to do so again.

Charcoalgrin is always prepared to speak at great length on any topic one could name. Her favorite topic, naturally, is herself. Those who have gone to Charcoalgrin in search of information usually get it, but at the cost of their lives when they show the faintest hint of boredom at her pedantic delivery.

Despite my best efforts, I was unable to learn any notable information about Charcoalgrin through what would be considered usual channels. Her servants are very suspicious and thorough, and caught and killed many agents I had sent to the ruins of the Forgotten City in search of information about Charcoalgrin. Eventually, I came to realize there is no better way to gather information than to interview her directly. I therefore sent one of my drakes, in a well-masked and enchanted Name-giver form, to pay Charcoalgrin a visit. Normally, visitors are in danger of death by incineration as her story drags on over a period of weeks—without pause, mind you. However, I enchanted my drake beforehand so he would show great interest in Charcoalgrin's story, escape with his life and transcribe the whole of the interview for this tome. What I know of Charcoalgrin comes from this interview.

Charcoalgrin's Nature

The dragon Charcoalgrin is known to anyone who has traveled to Parlainth and Haven in search of adventure and fortune. She is the most powerful creature living in the ruins, except perhaps for Horrors that have not yet been discovered in the catacombs' depths.

Charcoalgrin's story begins before the Scourge, when she was but barely an adult, and when the glorious city of Parlainth had been completed and its wizards and scholars were looking for ways to defend it from the Horrors. Like Mountainshadow, Charcoalgrin was intrigued by the Young Races, and studied the residents of Parlainth at a distance from her lair in the nearby Caucavic Mountains. But where Mountainshadow is wise and maintains discretion in his studies, Charcoalgrin fell victim to the innocence of her youth, and grew fascinated by the Name-givers who created the city. In defiance of dragon traditions concerning contact with the Theran Empire, in particular magicians of the Theran Empire, Charcoalgrin sought out contact with the magicians of Parlainth, and willingly taught Parlainth's magicians mysteries as yet undiscovered by their superiors in Thera.

One Theran wizard in particular fascinated the dragon. This human wizard, Named Eyripemes, was among the magicians leading the city's efforts to protect itself from the coming Scourge. Over time, Charcoalgrin took a liking to this human and revealed to him the secret to hiding Parlainth from the Horrors, a spell taught her by her sire, one that had not been cast since the previous age of magic. She shared with Eyripemes not only this ancient spell, but also the location of a





pocket of astral space, a separate reality of sorts where Parlainth could escape to during the Scourge, sealing itself off from the coming Horrors.

Charcoalgrin also instructed the city's magicians and builders in the creation of vessels that would allow them to move about in this astral pocket if needed. These vessels would allow the Theran magicians of Parlainth to explore regions of astral space unknown to any Name-givers save the dragons. The vessels resembled small stone airships, much smaller than vedettes, capable of carrying only a handful of passengers. Parlainth's magicians were able to build only a small number of these, less than two dozen, before they were forced to enact the spell that would send Parlainth from this world to the next.

Eyripemes was delighted, not only because he now had a way to protect his beloved city, but because he now had access to magic more ancient than anyone had ever imagined. The human devoted his life to Charcoalgrin, and would do anything she said in return for another nugget of wisdom.

As a gift for Eyripemes' devotion, Charcoalgrin transformed the wizard, giving him the shape-shifting ability of drakes, allowing him to take dragon form, and thus greatly extending his life. The relationship between the two strengthened, as often happens between teacher and student, and Charcoalgrin grew quite fond of Eyripemes, right up until Parlainth's disappearance. The day Parlainth vanished was indeed one of the saddest of Charcoalgrin's life.

[Though we were lenient with Charcoalgrin when we first learned of her involvement with the Therans of Parlainth, this transformation of Eyripemes, if true, is a secret she skillfully kept from us during the Council at which she was chastised, and therefore a matter for which Charcoalgrin must be held accountable. The passage of even five centuries does not diminish the gravity of this offense, nor does the fact that Eyripemes has long since died.]

Not even Charcoalgrin was immune to the spell the Therans used to cover their tracks into astral space. She, like all other Name-givers, forgot about the city the moment it vanished.

The years of the Scourge went by and finally the Long Night had ended. The Name-givers emerged from their kaers, and the dragons once again flew in the skies. Charcoalgrin was among them, but was never as animated or clever as she had been before.

Parlainth returned, and with it returned Charcoalgrin's memories of Parlainth and Eyripemes, and much of her former enthusiasm and energy. She flew immediately to the city, only to discover it in ruins, a shattered version of its former self. Rather than going back to her lair in the Caucavic Mountains, Charcoalgrin remained in the ruins, sequestering herself in what remained of the Imperial Palace, claiming the entire northern quarter of the city as her own.

Along with the return of her memories of Parlainth and Eyripemes came memories of the magical astral vessels she had told the magicians to build. She sought out these vessels in the city, hoping they might hold the secret of Parlainth's fall. She was able to find only a handful among the ruins, while a few others remained hidden deep in the undercity, crushed under the weight of tons of stone and rubble. After an exhaustive search, she returned to her lair in the Vaults of Parlainth, convinced that a number of vessels had in fact been jettisoned from Parlainth into astral space.

The notion that some of Parlainth's Name-givers, perhaps Eyripemes, had escaped the Horror-ravaged city in one of these vessels plagued Charcoalgrin's mind. As stragglers and criminals came to Parlainth, she exerted her particularly powerful personality and created from them a devoted army that now exists only to find clues of these missing vessels. Even more interesting is the evidence that Charcoalgrin is in fact searching for clues on how to return the city of Parlainth to its other reality, so she can continue her search for Eyripemes.

Location and Lair

Charcoalgrin is Parlainth's most well known resident, and clearly the most powerful Name-giver in all the city and the surrounding country. I suspect she did not choose to make her lair in the Vaults—specifically, in the promenade of the old Imperial Palace—for light reasons. Perhaps it is the symbolism as the seat of power, or perhaps that are other hidden factors to consider.

Because of the heavy curtains she has hung around the perimeter of the palace, visitors almost never directly view Charcoalgrin. Her booming voice is unmistakable, though, and can be heard throughout the city when she's upset.

Charcoalgrin's lair in the Imperial Palace gives her a strong central headquarters from which she can send out groups of servants, whom she calls Unforgivables, to search the ruins. The roving gangs return with arm-loads of trinkets, and even a few riches, which she has placed in the vaults beneath the palace. There are rumors among the Unforgivables, and even some of Haven's population, that Charcoalgrin has an alliance with Throal, and sends her treasures to the king





to help finance efforts against the Therans. Given her previous friendship with the Therans, this seems unlikely, but still the notion warrants further investigation.

Servants

Undesirables and hangers-on from across Barsaive gather beneath Charcoalgrin's protective wings. Likely they are drawn to her side through some enchantment or trickery, as casualties run high and she must fill out her forces. She organizes the riffraff into bands of Unforgivables, and sets them to patrolling and protecting her territory. Apparently the highest ambition of these Unforgivables is to hassle travelers and poke around the ruins to add to Charcoalgrin's trove. They are terrified of their mistress, but also lazy, so their exploration is erratic and without method.

The treasure they find is secondary to any hints of the missing vessels. Charcoalgrin has given the Unforgivables specific instructions to return immediately with items from a specific and peculiar list she has put together. Though I don't know the specific items on this list, it seems clear that they are related to the vessels. My drake was able to learn of one specific item, something referred to as an astral sextant. Any Unforgivable who finds one of these items, and can describe where he found it, is rewarded with a single selection from the dragon's vast treasures. Besides the immediate reward for returning items from the missing vessels, the Unforgivables are motivated by Charcoalgrin's stories that the missing ship or ships are filled with Parlainth's very finest treasures, not seen since before the Scourge. If this is true, it would explain the discrepancy between the supposed vast treasures of Parlainth and the paltry sums adventurers have been able to find in the ruins.

The Unforgivables are comprised of various Name-giver races, as well as some intelligent creatures such as ogres, griffins and gargoyles. Charcoalgrin's gang patrols the entire Vaults section of Parlainth, capturing or killing anyone who trespasses. The gang is huge, numbering in the hundreds, and they use clay badges to identify one another. Visitors in search of Charcoalgrin who can't convince the Unforgivables of their business frequently have need to steal badges from legitimate gang members. This is a strange and pathetic ritual, of which Charcoalgrin must certainly be aware.

Allies and Enemies

Since the end of the Scourge, Charcoalgrin has sequestered herself within Parlainth's ruins and has made a point of separating herself from the rest of dragon society. Whether this is due to the dragons' criticisms of her actions pertaining to Eyripemes or has some other cause is uncertain. Regardless, I find it ironic that many of my fellow great dragons have so conveniently forgotten they, too, had relationships with other Name-givers in the previous age of magic, some even having sired offspring as I have sired you.

I am uniquely sensitive to Charcoalgrin's predicament. It is likely that we would probably share many feelings on the subjects of Name-givers and isolation. I have sent more agents to discuss the possibility of alliance with Charcoalgrin, although her single-minded dedication to finding Eyripemes may limit her usefulness.

Charcoalgrin's closest, perhaps only, friend is Torgak, the troll warrior who founded the city of Haven outside Parlainth. Both feel territorial about the ruins. Both despise meddling outsiders. And both are content to leave one another alone, surely the mark of a lasting friendship.

Few know of Charcoalgrin's plan to send Parlainth back whence it came, or else she would have garnered far more enemies than she has. Her isolation has kept her from angering too many Name-givers or governments so far, and her self-imposed isolation has kept her apart from the affairs of the dragons. Except for the persistent rumors that she sends money to Throal out of her own gathered treasures, I would say she is certainly an enemy of Throal, especially given her previous association with Thera.

The subject of friends and enemies is the only subject on which the talkative dragon is circumspect. Most of the Names she mentions are hundreds of years old. Charcoalgrin still lives in the past.

Charcoalgrin's Goals

Beneath her pedantic demeanor, Charcoalgrin wants only to know the truth of her missing friend and student. Her every move is based either on gathering more information about the vanished vessels, or reminiscing about the time before the Scourge.





There is a second, although certainly less sentimental, possibility: Charcoalgrin wants the treasures on the missing vessels, not her lost student. Charcoalgrin is perhaps the only Name-giver alive who was directly involved with Parlainth before the Scourge. She is uniquely qualified to describe the city before its disappearance, and indeed seems to know the origin of every treasure her Unforgivables ever bring to her. Her suspicion of the missing vessels is based on the kinds of treasures that are not being returned, or reported by her friend Torgak in Haven. She believes that somewhere, afloat in that pocket of astral space, a number of jettisoned vessels filled with all the treasures and lost knowledge of Parlainth await her discovery, preserved for all time until rediscovered.

Her efforts to journey to the astral pocket would be innocuous enough if it didn't require taking Parlainth back with her. Were the great city to vanish again, the symbolism might likely terrify Name-givers everywhere. Beyond that, the depth of magical secrets hidden in Parlainth have only been scratched. There is much you can learn from the Forgotten City, much of which will likely aid you in the coming months and years. For now, we must ensure Charcoalgrin never achieves her goals, lest her success lead to our failure.





EARTHROOT

[The Outcast's knowledge of Root Protector and his efforts on behalf of the Kingdom of Throal is troublesome, as it reveals the fact that he has learned much concerning the course of actions we pursued after the Council at which we banished him. It has become abundantly clear that the Outcast has not spent the several hundred years since that time in idle indulgences, but has actively utilized his resources to investigate each of us and that which we involve ourselves in.

As he's done in several of these essays, the Outcast points to potential conflicts within our ranks in an attempt to sow dissent among us. We must take care to remain as dispassionate as possible when reading these words, and keep in mind that much of what the Outcast writes may be nothing more than misinformation and attempts to misdirect our attentions. For the time being, we must remain focused on our immediate goals, and on the plans we developed at our most recent Council. For though the Outcast and his children are of concern to us, we cannot allow ourselves to be distracted.]

You may be tempted to believe that because Earthroot so rarely ascends from his underground home into the light of day, he will take no interest in nor interfere with your doings. Do not make this mistake. The fact that Earthroot lairs beneath the Throal Mountains gives him some stake in Throal's fate. I have discovered, however, that Earthroot's stake in Throal goes far beyond a simple interest in what occurs near his home. For some time, he has actively aided the dwarf kingdom—apparently in collusion with Icewing, who regards the dwarfs as his personal pets. Why Earthroot should go to such lengths on Icewing's behalf remains a mystery to me; given how close together their territories lie, Earthroot and Icewing should be bitter rivals. But for us, the reason matters far less than the fact. Earthroot is yet another dragon ally of Throal, even if the dwarfs do not yet realize it. And he is a powerful ally, gifted with knowledge of elemental and earth magic beyond almost any other Name-giver now living. Before you move against Throal, therefore, you must first deal with Earthroot—or else be prepared to meet him on the field of battle, arcane or otherwise.

Earthroot's Nature

Though a generation younger than Mountainshadow and Icewing, Earthroot has lived long enough to gain considerable wisdom—much of it from far-off Cathay, his native land. He came to Barsaive three hundred years after the death of All-Wings, possibly in search of territory. I cannot be certain, but my drakes tell me of a rumor that a young Earthroot lost a battle with an ancient Cathay dragon Named White Lotus. Soon afterward, Earthroot disappeared from Cathay. It would be prudent for some of your Holders of Trust to ascertain the truth of this tale; if you can find White Lotus and learn from her what occurred, so much the better. This long ago defeat may well reveal a weakness in Earthroot that you can exploit—and in dealing with him, you will need every advantage you can get.

Earthroot favors the dark and secret places of the earth because they reflect his essential self. This love of darkness, of being hidden, lends some credence to the conflict with White Lotus; that titanic battle is said to have taken place above a high peak Named Spirit Mountain, whose snowy slopes were well known to Earthroot and upon whose summit he hoped to lair. The bitterness of his defeat may show in his self-chosen exile so far from Cathay, and in his choice to live almost exclusively underground. Since his arrival in Barsaive, he has shown himself in the open air a mere three times, if the legends of the Young Races are to be believed. I have seen him only once, when he joined with Mountainshadow and the others at the Council in which they declared me Outcast.

Earthroot is exceptionally large, and his scales appear to glisten whether wet or dry. They shimmer in all the colors of mother-of-pearl, from silver to pale green to the rose of the dawn sky. The scales on his underbelly are the deep green of seaweed, and his luminous large eyes are as black as the underground night. Many who have seen him and lived to tell of it are dazzled by his beauty and mesmerized by his gaze; I have heard the latter described as “like falling into a depthless, dark pool.” There may be some magical glamour in his look; take care that your own people do not succumb to it if they see him, or you may find yourselves dealing with Earthroot far earlier than you had planned.

Though he prefers to spend most of his time submerged in underground lakes, Earthroot is as much at home out of the water as in it. Some foolish younger Name-givers think that because he lives so much underwater, Earthroot must be a leviathan rather than a true dragon. I tell you otherwise. A dragon he is, with all of a great dragon's strength, cunning, guile and patience. As with so many of my former brethren, it is a fatal mistake to underestimate him.

Living under the earth, at depths where almost no Name-giver cares to go since the end of the Scourge, gives Earthroot the freedom to act far removed from prying eyes. More so than any other great dragon of my acquaintance, he speaks in riddles and acts in shadow. He is not a constant meddler, like Mountainshadow; but when he does take action, each one is like a stone tossed into a pool. Consequences flow from them like ripples across the water—and for every





ripple you can see, there is at least one deep current you cannot. Highly intelligent like all the race, Earthroot can see far into the future, and routinely lays plans that will not bear fruit for centuries. To give you a single example, his seemingly impulsive act in saving a small band of t'skrang from the ravages of the Scourge has given him an entire society of devoted worshippers and lackeys to call upon. The Pale Ones—primitive t'skrang who live out their brief lives beneath the Throal Mountains, in Earthroot's domain—belong to him, as he intended from the very first word he ever spoke to their ancestors. Through one simple action, he gained a population of servants that many another dragon might envy: willing, grateful and endlessly renewable through means more natural and far simpler than the rites used to create drakes. Even Mountainshadow must have been impressed by this stroke of quiet genius.

Earthroot's magical ability matches his intelligence, and may exceed it. Even I do not know the full extent of his powers; I can tell you only that his long years under the earth have given him an understanding of its magic that surpasses the knowledge of any other great dragon I know (with the possible exception of Mountainshadow, whose drive to learn everything may have kept him ahead of Earthroot in this regard). Among the most unique of Earthroot's powers is one I scarcely believe to be possible, but first-hand accounts by my drake servants make it difficult for me to discount it entirely. According to reports by my servants, Earthroot has the ability to move through the earth itself, merging with earth and rock and traveling through it as easily as you might walk across the streets of Iopos. The only other beings known to possess this ability are spirits, and obsidimen who are able to merge with their Liferock. Given his strong affinity for the elemental magic of the earth, it stands to reason that Earthroot would seek out such knowledge, and it is possible that Earthroot sought out obsidimen from whom he might learn and expand this ability. If the tales told me by my drakes are to be believed, it could explain Earthroot's ability to move about the caverns of his underground lair so quickly and efficiently.

Elemental magic of all kinds is his especial interest—but do not conclude from this that he has seriously neglected the study of illusion, wizardry or any other field of arcane knowledge. Be assured that his magic equals your own in every respect, even with all I have taught you. If you hope to get the better of Earthroot by magical means, you will first need to find a chink in his armor; a head-on battle is one you can only lose. I can tell you of certain ways in which he is using his magical knowledge for Throal's benefit, in the hope that this may provide a clue to its limits. Be wise; do your utmost to discover the true nature and extent of Earthroot's knowledge and power before you attempt to deal with him.

Apart from the Pale Ones and the dwarfs of Throal, Earthroot appears little interested in the affairs of the Young Races. Unlike Mountainshadow, he does not find them objects worthy of constant study or devotion. Only those Name-givers who dwell in or near his domain truly matter to him. He considers them under his protection, and will fight for them with every means at his disposal.

Earthroot's Domain

Earthroot claims territory that stretches for many hundreds of dragon-lengths beneath the Throal Mountains and many fathoms deep into the earth. His vast domain begins beneath Throal, but far exceeds the paltry boundaries of the dwarf kingdom. Wherever the countless underground rivers flow through echoing caverns and tunnels, there is Earthroot's domain. His favorite haunts lie where the deepest-delving dwarf miner scarcely dreams of going; he and his Pale Ones know more twists and turns of the giant, underground maze they call home than there are scales on a dragon's body.

Earthroot's lair lies at the heart of this enormous maze, where the rivers drain into a colossal network of caverns to form underground lakes. Beneath the largest of these, surrounded by a fantastical garden of tree-sized mushrooms, glowing fungi and other plants too strange to Name, is Earthroot's favored resting place. The Pale Ones call it "Shuss Halima," or "glittering home," because of the green-white glow of the fungus that covers the enclosing rock. The cavern that holds this inland sea would take one of you many weeks to circumnavigate—all under the watchful eye of the Pale Ones whose dwellings are carved into its walls.

Regarded as privileged by their fellows, these Pale Ones have the honor of serving their dragon "king" his daily meal: shiploads upon shiploads of foodstuffs, from fresh-caught fish to the daintiest delicacies offered for sale in Throal's Grand Bazaar. (Earthroot is positively gluttonous, though his tastes have become coarsened by subsisting on so much Throalic fare. What the dwarfs call delicacies would scarcely be fit for the lowliest servant in your household in Iopos.) Earthroot indulges his natural taste for fresh meat by eating prodigious quantities of fish, along with an occasional dwarf mining or exploring party for variety (often, like the fish, caught for him by his devoted t'skrang minions). Be prepared to lose any agents that you send down into this realm; assuming they survive the myriad dangers of the under-earth and the quick weapons of suspicious Pale Ones, Earthroot may choose to devour them on a whim. Or he may strike up a





conversation with them, especially if they bring him some tale he has never heard before, or a gift of something edible that catches his fancy. There is no telling with Earthroot. Temperamental to an extreme, he may express his displeasure at being disturbed by eating the disturbers—or he may play the gracious sovereign to the hilt, welcoming outsiders to his “court” and fairly drowning them in hospitality.

Regarding the Pale Ones

As your agents will likely be dealing with the Pale Ones sooner or later, I will tell you what I know of them. In appearance they are paler than the t’skrang of the surface world, most often white or light green; the occasional one has luminous skin. Like their surface kindred, they are canny traders and deadly foes when provoked. Unlike other t’skrang, they can see perfectly well in the dark, and need no light quartzes or torches to guide their way underground. To them, these things merely serve to mark out intruders for attack. Whether they developed this remarkable night vision over the centuries of the Scourge or whether Earthroot somehow gave them this ability magically, I have yet to determine. If the latter, it would be extremely useful for you to discover some method of doing the same. The ability to see will make your own people less easy targets, and might make the difference between victory and defeat should it become necessary to conquer the Pale Ones.

Assuming you have first found a way to deal with Earthroot, you should have little trouble asserting your sovereignty over the Pale Ones. They are fierce fighters, to be sure, and will have the advantage of home ground; however, their small numbers and primitive weapons should ultimately be their undoing. Each of their villages occupies a large cavern, which they call a Great Dome. Most Pale One villages comprise five to six nials, each with thirty to fifty members. Your forces should therefore face no more than three hundred t’skrang in even the most populous village, and even in these, no more than two-thirds will be men and women of fighting age. (Though one of my drakes tells me that even a Pale One child, provided it is past the toddling stage common among the Young Races, can be dangerous. One such mite of a t’skrang nearly stabbed him to death with her tiny dagger while he slept.) If other factors prevent you from making an assault in force, it is entirely possible to weaken the Pale Ones first by manipulating them into a feud. They war among themselves regularly, most often over fishing territory. Though it is their custom to fight ritualized battles and take prisoners rather than to slaughter each other, killings have occurred among them—and if you take care of Earthroot first, they will no longer have their king to mediate when the feud gets out of hand. Under these circumstances, you might be able to thin their ranks enough to conquer the survivors with a token force of soldiers.

The Pale Ones rarely venture up to the surface world, most often only at Earthroot’s command. My drakes tell me that the Pale Ones serve as Earthroot’s principal liaison with Icewing; on those occasions where he must communicate with his fellow great dragon, he sends small parties of Pale Ones to Icewing’s lair with messages. The Pale Ones also serve as Earthroot’s eyes and ears within Throal and throughout the mountain range. They can travel almost anywhere in the Throal Mountains by following the maze of underground streams, which is as familiar to them as a nesting ground to a hatchling. They also know every tunnel and cranny in the dwarf kingdom, including some that its builders long ago forgot. Any agents you send to Throal should therefore be extra wary that their doings are not observed by these silent watchers in the underground shadows.

The Pale Ones did not always love the under-earth so much, however. As far as I have managed to determine, their ancestors came from a large village on the banks of the northern Coil River. Kin to the Shivalahala of House Syrtis, they were charged by her to visit each village in the northern Mid-Reach and bring their fellow t’skrang the vital knowledge of how to survive the Scourge in hibernation so that the long confinement would not drive the t’skrang mad. By the time they finished their task, the Scourge was almost upon them. In a burst of typical t’skrang emotionalism, however, they insisted on going home rather than weathering the Scourge in the last village they had reached.

As might have been expected, they arrived at their home village to find the Horrors feasting on the corpses of fellow villagers within the broken walls of their shattered kaer. They fought the monsters, a foolhardy act that cost many of them their lives. The survivors of that grim battle fled toward the nearest sanctuary they could think of: the dwarf kingdom of Throal.

According to the Pale Ones’ own legends, their ancestors knew of and had frequently sailed down the underground channel of the Coil that leads beneath the Throal Mountains. The fleeing t’skrang took this route, hoping to enter Throal from beneath. However, they were too late; the dwarfs had sealed off every entrance into their safe haven, and the t’skrang were left to the mercy of Horrors that had already begun to infiltrate the mountains’ depths. Still more died in fruitless attempts to fight or flee, until Earthroot found the remnant wandering aimlessly through the maze of tunnels. Ever one to capitalize on an opportunity, Earthroot offered the despairing t’skrang shelter in his lair, in exchange for devoted service ever after. With certain death as the only other choice, the t’skrang agreed. Over the centuries of the Scourge, Earthroot molded them into the perfect unquestioning servants; he did whatever he could to speed their descent





into barbarism, and made them the pitiable primitives they are today. The Pale Ones do not see their fate this way, of course. Their legends speak of Earthroot as a glorious benefactor, a virtual deity of a dragon. They revere him above all other living beings, no matter what hardship his commands impose. He extracts tribute of True water from them, bringing them into conflict with the cave trolls who share the underground tunnels and also crave the precious element; his prodigious appetite and finicky tastes result in vast amounts of the best fish going down his gullet instead of into Pale One bellies; and when he prompts them to bring him one too many parties of dwarfs as a meal, he exposes them to retaliation from Icewing, who does not take kindly to losing too many of his play-things. Yet still they honor and serve him, and will likely do so until this world perishes.

Earthroot and Throal

Neither the occasional friction between Earthroot and Icewing nor the former's appetite for the odd hapless dwarf changes the unpleasant fact that Earthroot fully supports the dwarf kingdom, in ways magical and otherwise. Our plans for the future of Barsaive depend upon understanding the precise nature of the threat Earthroot poses, and devising an effective way of rendering him harmless before making any definite move. But even assuming we accomplish that, Earthroot's actions on Throal's behalf have already made the conquest of Throal a difficult prospect.

Among his most effective measures, Earthroot has been using his immense knowledge of earth magic to shape the building and expansion of the dwarf kingdom. From the height and breadth of the Royal Hall to the precise location and shape of the underground cities built since the Scourge, Earthroot has acted as Throal's chief architect and builder... all without the dwarfs' knowledge, of course. Indeed, many Throalic residents do not even know of Earthroot's existence. He has accomplished his end as he usually does, in a cloak of secrecy too thick for any but the most discerning (such as myself) to penetrate. Even now he frequently visits construction sites in Throal, disguised as a dwarf of unassuming aspect, and offers advice to the workers on precisely how high to raise that wall or how deeply to hollow this rock for a house. He even dictates the design of the streets! And his advice is always taken; all those who recall meeting this "mysterious stranger" speak of his voice as being strangely compelling and his words impossible to ignore. Some building crews have found themselves doing precisely the opposite of what they intended, or tearing down a week's worth of work without a murmur, simply because a man they did not know came from nowhere and told them to.

The purpose of these machinations appears twofold. First and most obviously, Earthroot is making certain that Throal maximizes its physical defenses. Given the stormy relations between Throal and the Theran Empire, he or Icewing (or both) must have anticipated that one day Theran legions would come bearing down on the dwarf kingdom, and so Earthroot has been making every effort to ensure that the conquest of Throal would cost as many Theran lives as possible. Indeed, he may have hoped to make it too costly for the Therans to stomach. Your own soldiers will face similar hardships. Even if Throal and Thera's fighting forces batter each other senseless before you make your move, the armies of Iopos must still cope with the sheer physical difficulties of overrunning a gigantic underground fortress with thousands of tunnels in which rebels can hide, blind corners around which an enemy may shoot, narrow corridors designed as chokepoints in which a few fighters can pick off ten times their number one by one, and so on. No matter how few of them may be left, Throal's defenders will be able to inflict damage far beyond their numbers because of Earthroot's aid. It is well for our plans that the soldiers of Iopos will go wherever a Denairastas tell them; without such blind loyalty, the likelihood of high casualties might cause some of them to reconsider their oaths of service to you.

More disturbing is Earthroot's second goal: the strengthening of Throal's True Pattern by manipulating its physical structure. He appears to be able to direct the flow of the earth's energies in certain directions by the placement of a wall, the alignment of a street, the shaping of a tunnel and so forth, to augment the True Pattern of the dwarf kingdom and to maximize its other magical defenses. Similarly, these physical manipulations appear to channel the magical power of elemental earth veins buried deep within the rock. Several such veins converge near the Royal Hall in the heart of Throal, and their presence enhances the magical abilities of the adepts who constantly guard the Hall and the Royal Chambers beyond. Even worse for our purposes, these elemental energies augment the power of the magical treasures upon which these defenders may call in great need. That your niece Jada managed to bypass these defenses and ritually slay King Varulus III is a testament to the remarkable abilities of your bloodline; but with Earthroot as well as King Neden now forewarned, I doubt that such measures will work a second time. You must therefore bend all your efforts toward discovering the true nature and extent of the earth magic that is strengthening Throal, so that you may devise a method of countering them. I will aid you all I can in this regard.





Alliance with Icewing

The apparent collaboration between Earthroot and Icewing to safeguard Throal, though at first glance an impediment to our plans, may ultimately offer some weaknesses to exploit. Unfortunately, there appears to be no open enmity between the two dragons, as there is between Mountainshadow and Usun; however, all is not precisely tranquil between the pair, either. Regarding aid to the dwarfs, they are utterly in agreement; I fear no wedge can be driven between them on that issue. Their differences appear to be much more personal and petty in nature. It seems that, on occasion, Icewing attempts to dictate to Earthroot precisely how he should aid the dwarfs and when. After all, the dwarfs are Icewing's special pets; added to which, he is older (and therefore, he thinks, wiser) than Earthroot, and native to Barsaive. Earthroot, as the younger and an outlander, cannot possibly know what is best for Throal better than Icewing does, and so should graciously follow Icewing's orders (or so Icewing appears to believe).

Understandably, Earthroot resents this. No great dragon takes kindly to another lording it over him; we are a proud race, and must each do things in our own way even when that way is utterly wrong (witness Mountainshadow's hypocritical and misguided meddlings with the Young Races, while banishing me from the company of dragons for doing no worse). And Earthroot has a temper; of all the dragons save possibly Usun, he is the one least able to bear being patronized or dictated to. He relieves his wounded feelings most often by devouring dwarfs who venture too far into his domain. Often he uses the Pale Ones to procure dwarfs for him; their knowledge of the underground waterways makes them invaluable guides for dwarf miners and explorers, but at Earthroot's behest they will turn on the very dwarfs employing them and deliver them into Earthroot's larder. Sometimes, if he is feeling generous or if Mountainshadow prevails upon Icewing to offer the Rite of Transgression, Earthroot merely holds the captive dwarfs for ransom—usually a Name-giver unlucky enough to anger Icewing, or a minor bauble from Icewing's hoard. Icewing, for his part, allows Earthroot to get away with this behavior... for a time. Invariably, however, he retaliates on an equally petty scale—setting this or that village of Pale Ones against each other, or prompting small bands of dwarfs to avenge their fallen fellows by killing a few of the primitives.

Whenever this little game threatens to get out of hand, Mountainshadow steps in to smooth the ruffled scales. And herein lies our opportunity to put this petty bickering to use. If your agents can escalate the tit-for-tat skirmishing between the Pale Ones and the dwarfs, Earthroot and Icewing will likely blame each other, and raise their disputes to a point where Mountainshadow must intervene. And anything that distracts Mountainshadow is an advantage for us—to say nothing of distracting Earthroot, which will give you a freer hand to observe and explore his domain. Those observations may yet lead us to some breakthrough in understanding the workings of the earth magic so powerful there, or may point to some weakness in Earthroot that we have not anticipated.

I must stress again, however, that Earthroot will defend Throal if it is attacked. No dispute with Icewing, however bitter, would induce him to leave Throal to the mercies of your soldiers. Therefore, you must either take care of him before-hand or be prepared to fight him—physically and magically—before you contemplate such an assault.

The White Tree

There is one other magical peril of which you must beware when taking on Earthroot: the White Tree, which he guards with obsessive devotion. Indeed, it appears to be the reason why he chose to lair under the Throal Mountains and not the Twilight Peaks, the Caucavics, the Thunder Mountains or the Delaris range. You may have heard somewhat of this Tree, though the legends of the Young Races say little more than how it grows beneath the Throal Mountains and is intimately tied to the destiny of the dragons. I will tell you a great deal more, including what dragon legends say of it.

First, what I know to be true: the White Tree sprang from the heart of All-Wings, greatest of all dragons. When All-Wings was slain and her body scattered across Barsaive, a portion of it—including her heart—ended up beneath the Throal Mountains. Upon his arrival in Barsaive three centuries later, Earthroot took up residence beneath those same mountains in order to guard the sacred remains. Soon afterward—whether on his own initiative or another's direction, I cannot yet say—Earthroot took the heart of All-Wings and embedded it in a certain underground lake bed, where veins of True earth and orichalcum met beneath waters laden with True water. The confluence of the two True elements and orichalcum, added to the innate magical properties of the dragon heart, produced the fantastical plant known as the White Tree. The Tree carries within it all the power of the things that made it, and Earthroot guards it to this day. (It is this task that earned him the Name of Root Protector.)

So vast is Earthroot's underground realm that even I have not ascertained precisely where the Tree first began to grow. I have seen it in Earthroot's mind, however. It completely fills the cavern where it first sprang into being, and its roots travel far down the tangle of tunnels that lead from the lake in every direction. It glows the brilliant white of a





thousand light quartzes, and its leaves gleam like rubies, sapphires and pearls. It appears to have half a hundred trunks at least, and its roots protrude from the lake like shimmering white rocks from the sea. I surmise that over time, the Tree has grown many roots, similar to ordinary plants with runner vines, until one can no longer determine which root was the original. Vast quantities of True water are necessary for its survival; every scrap of that element received by Earthroot as tribute from his Pale Ones goes to water the Tree and keep it robust.

I regret I do not know the nature and extent of the Tree's magic—only that it is exceptionally powerful, and that it is tied to the magic of our kind. I presume that Earthroot either has used or will use the Tree's magic on Throal's behalf if necessary; it would be foolish to believe otherwise. It would not surprise me if the Tree is partly responsible for Earthroot's formidable command of elemental magic. One cannot spend centuries in close proximity to a living magical treasure like the White Tree and not learn something of its nature, or fail to be affected by it.

One of my drakes is searching for the Tree even as I write this, and I urge you to send some of your own most gifted magicians to seek it as well. If we can learn of its powers, we may be able to turn them against Earthroot and destroy him—or at least deprive him of those powers so he may not turn them against us. I counsel against attempting to destroy the Tree, however. The problem of finding and obliterating all of its roots is formidable enough, even without the danger mentioned in dragon legend. Our tales say that if the White Tree ever dies, dragonkind will fade from the world. This may be only a fable, but I do not care to test it. Destroying the Tree might give us victory over Mountainshadow and his ilk, but only at the price of our own downfall. If the legend is true, I would no longer be here to guide and guard you as I have done. And though other blood than a dragon's runs through your veins, who knows what the fading of dragonkind might mean for you? Much of your magic is dragon magic, given to you through me; you might lose it, and along with it your power in Barsaive. Or you might fade from the world as well, or sicken and die as your Pattern slowly, painfully erodes away, or become some monstrous things we can none of us imagine.

Earthroot's Drakes

Earthroot has three drakes that I know of, though he may have more (anything is possible with so secretive a dragon). Like their master, they love the water more than the land, though they are equally at home in either place. They somewhat resemble small leviathans, but do not be deceived; they have all the intelligence of true drakes, and are far more than the mere creatures for which some might easily mistake them. When in the form of the Young Races, they most often incarnate as t'skrang—predictable, considering the nature of Earthroot's pets. Indeed, one of the drakes frequently mingles with the Pale Ones, sending "royal commands" to them from their "king" or simply spending time among them for purposes known only to Earthroot. I also have my suspicions about certain t'skrang adventurers who turn up every so often in Throal... but thus far, my own drakes have not been able to confirm them. Compounding the difficulty of tracing Earthroot's drakes, of course, is the unfortunate fact that they are not limited to t'skrang form. They may incarnate as any of the Young Races; the t'skrang simply seem to be their preference.

I have learned the drakes' Names, and a little something of each of them that may prove useful in predicting their movements and actions. The eldest of the three, a female Named Niu, often takes the form of a k'stulaami and flies around the Throal Mountains, spying out the land for her master. She also serves as his liaison to the House of the Spirit Wind, a small community of winged t'skrang in the southern Throal Mountains. These t'skrang, brought to the Spirit Winds by their unwinged kin from nialls all along the Serpent River, maintain those kinship ties and serve as one of Earthroot's links to t'skrang foundations and crew covenants throughout Barsaive. Though the t'skrang in general do not revere Earthroot as the Pale Ones do (indeed, many foundations do not even know he exists), they frequently serve his interests without knowing it—especially when those interests happen to coincide with Icewing's, or with Throal's. As I mention Icewing, I am reminded of recent rumors that suggest that the t'skrang of the House of the Spirit Wing are actually among the servants of Icewing, and are allowed to make their home in the Throal Mountains only with Icewing's permission. I don't know if these rumors are true, but should this be prove to be so, it establishes yet another link between the great dragons and the t'skrang. This is something that bears investigation, should your agents have the time and opportunity.

Another, more direct link between Earthroot and the t'skrang is the drake Golrin, a male of middling years with a special affection for the lizard-men. He often swims down the Coil River to observe the t'skrang villages along its banks, and Earthroot takes full advantage of Golrin's curiosity by using him to watch over t'skrang affairs outside the Throal Mountains. From what my drakes tell me, I suspect Golrin's activities go beyond mere watching. He has appeared on occasion in certain rebellious villages in House K'tenshin territory—the same villages to whom the Kingdom of Throal is supplying weapons, this according to a certain Theran document that recently came to my attention, and one which I shall share with you presently. We can surmise that Earthroot at least knows of the smuggling and uses Golrin to keep an





eye on it. I suspect Golrin is actively involved in the operation, using his formidable magical gifts to assist the dwarfs and t'skrang rebels. Such aid would certainly explain why the Therans have yet to capture a single Throalic agent or t'skrang smuggler involved with the operation, despite their best efforts since learning of it.

Finally, it may be possible to suborn the youngest drake, a male Named Loyang, provided we do so with care and subtlety. Loyang is intensely interested in elemental magic, and Earthroot has been doling out his own knowledge of it to Loyang in scraps. Like youth of all kinds, Loyang is becoming impatient with the pace of his teaching; he wants to know everything, now if not sooner. Though as yet no thought of disloyalty has crossed his mind, we may be able to change that with a few artful promises. I have taught you and yours considerable elemental magic that Loyang may not yet know; offer him some of this lore, along with some pleasant words intended to spark questions in his mind, and you may be able to turn him. You might even suggest that Earthroot has no intention of teaching him the deeper mysteries of elemental and earth magic; the grudging way in which Earthroot has so far doled out his tidbits of wisdom can only serve to bolster such a suggestion. But take care in this as in everything else. Planting a treacherous drake in Earthroot's camp would greatly increase our chances of getting him out of the way; however, to fail the attempt because of ill-considered haste could end all our plans before they have even begun.





ICEWING

The information put forth here by the Outcast regarding my brother Doll-Maker is most disturbing. Despite the flood of misinformation we have meticulously fed him, the accuracy and depth of his knowledge concerning Doll-Maker's goals and plans makes his penetration of Doll-Maker's security most clear. If we have underestimated the Outcast's trickery and subterfuge in this arena until now, we cannot risk continuing to do so in arenas of more importance, and must recognize the Outcast as the most serious threat posed to us in some time.

The dragon Icewing is as much a meddler as his brother Mountainshadow, yet even more dangerous as he lacks what little vision his brother has. As evidenced by his reputation, Icewing has had the most involvement of any dragon in other Name-giver's affairs, and yet he holds his brother's favor, and maneuvers just indirectly enough that the others do not challenge him. Historically and traditionally, Icewing has acted as a "guardian" of sorts for the Young Races, manipulating them in directions he sees fit, with no heed to their own wishes. In his cold eyes, dragons are a superior race who should guide the Young Races with our enlightened vision. He fails to see the value of the Young Races, or to recognize their refreshing viewpoints as something to be learned from. He has suffered for this shortsightedness in the past, when his stature was tarnished by harsh failures and betrayals in the rebellion against dragon rule. These events sparked a transformation in this once shining child of All-Wings, who proceeds now as a belligerent crusader with a vendetta, intent on bringing down the dragons' enemies. Engaged in this passion, he pursues an agenda that borders on direct intervention, drawing many warnings from his kin, but never the censure and exile I was subjected to.

If many of Icewing's supremacist beliefs are similar to Usun's, his methods are not. Icewing is a more skilled puppet-master than Mountainshadow, and he is willing to take actions that are often more direct, visible and rash. In my view he poses the most immediate danger to your family and its goals, as he is a dragon of action and will be first to sally forth in opposition. If you play him right, however, by first wrapping yourself in shadows and then striking like a skeorx when the time has come, his response will be agitated, and thus more visible and predictable than those the others take.

As aged as he is, Icewing's knowledge and skills are as vast as Mountainshadow's, but of a more specialized nature. His primary interests are in the creation and propagation of drakes as well as summoning and communicating with spirits of every hue. His skill with the spirit kind is unsurpassed among our folk, but he lacks the wisdom and will to use it well. It is telling that his most notable achievement with his abilities has been to selfishly create more pawns for his games.

Icewing's History

In order for you to fully understand Icewing's goals and motivations, you must first understand his history.

Spawned by All-Wings, Icewing is an ancient and powerful elder dragon, second only to Mountainshadow (and then in ways nearly indistinguishable to those of the Younger Races). Under All-Wing's tutelage, their brood was raised to be proud and vigorous leaders among dragons, and they were instructed thoroughly in dragon lore and trained to reach the pinnacle of dragon might and wisdom. Few of their clutch have survived the trying times since then, proving Icewing to be one of the more cunning and resilient of All-Wings' progeny. Yet Icewing has been even more impotent in fulfilling this noble legacy than Mountainshadow, and his lesser status among dragonkind surely rankles his hubris. During the Age of Dragons, Icewing was charged by All-Wings herself with overseeing the dragons' relationships and development of those they ruled. In this capacity he became closely tied to the Young Races, and maintained an intimate relationship with the Children of Alamaise, our Chosen Servitors, who administrated our rule. This exalted position was a hollow one, for in his arrogance he underestimated these Name-givers, viewing them as mere toys and failing to foresee the treachery brewing in their hearts. He failed to understand them, to identify their ambition as equal to our own, and allowed them opportunities that were taken advantage of in the rebellion. Thus does Icewing bear a heavy mantle of responsibility for past mistakes, and the cost of dragon lives—especially his sire's—weighs heavily on his ego.

In the many ages that have passed since those dark times, Icewing has eagerly sought to make amends for past faults, and has aggressively pursued research into the creation of a new race to more efficiently serve us and handle our affairs among Name-givers. His knowledge of the workings of spirits was the key to this task, and together with the dragon Yuichotol, they created the ritual known as the Dance of Blue Spirits. Thus were drakes created, and Icewing now has a new selection of pawns to replace those Name-givers who had been lost to him. For this gift to our kind, Icewing earned the name Doll-Maker—representative of his attitude towards his playthings. Yuichotol and Icewing, along with the dragon Named Cloudtamer, wasted no time implementing their new toys in their clandestine war against Thera. The





drakes were used to infiltrate and disrupt the Theran Empire, hindering their orichalcum gathering and spreading their Rites of Protection to those in need. As a result, this trio was singled out and targeted by the Therans, and Yuichotol and Cloudtamer were killed. Icewing watched silently from afar with the Eye of All-Wings as his fierce and potent peers were slain, and the Therans turned to assault his lair. It was a test of Mountainshadow's gift of silken speech to talk Icewing out of a direct confrontation, and withdraw to prepare an appropriate response. Icewing listened, and when the Therans arrived, he was gone, and his lair emptied.

After this, Icewing declared that in order to effectively counter the actions of the Therans and their influence among Name-givers, it was a necessity to aid and support the power blocks among the other Name-givers that would counter the Therans' agenda. He convinced a Council to allow him to give the dwarf King Varulus and his heirs potions of longevity that would enable them to consolidate their control of Throal. Together with Earthroot's foundation strengthening and Mountainshadow's network, he hopes to build Throal into a nation capable of withstanding Thera and uniting Barsaive, and perhaps even bring the battle to the Isle of Thera itself one day. I suspect that his true motivation here is to regain the glory he once held as a delegate to the Young Races, and to absolve himself for the mistakes that cost us so. It was at this same Council that I was held accountable for my transgressions in begetting you, and was Banished, forever labeled Outcast.

Icewing's Nature

As one of the most public and visible of dragonkind, Icewing has learned well how to deal with scrutiny. Many of his plots are buried deeply, under layers and layers of lies and misinformation, spread through various agents and dupes. Dealing with Icewing often means penetrating illusion and deception to even get a hint of the truth. However, he is more impulsive and impatient than his brethren, and frequently intervenes with an overconfidence that reveals an astonishing disregard for protocol and the wishes of his fellow great dragons (that he has faced little reprimand for). This is especially true when his pawns or he himself are directly challenged, in which case he is prone to act aggressively and prematurely against his rivals.

Icewing's views towards the Young Races once contained elements of fondness and nurturing to rival Mountainshadow's, but now are of a more "protective" nature, as Icewing sees his responsibility to guard them from threats generated by the dragons' actions in the past and "guide" them onto a path more in line with his visions. He makes extensive use of Name-giver servants, and his own private network complements Mountainshadow's as the backbone of the dragons' spy network. His primary focus is the Theran Empire, but his agents are spread throughout the world, and he is not afraid to use them, nor as slow to react as the others.

Icewing has an open door policy of sorts toward Name-givers, allowing them to approach his lair on Mount Vapor on the condition that they bring a suitable gift. In his self-appointed role as liaison and advocate, he maintains this policy as a sort of responsibility he feels towards the Young Races. The demand of gifts is a testimony to his belief in dragon superiority, a throwback to the past that he maintains as a lesson. I'm sure that his open door policy has proven beneficial in many ways, as many adventurers and adepts bring him news or items or questions that reveal much about various events in the world. It also allows the dwarfs of Throal and the agents of other dragons to access him if they have need of his assistance.

Icewing has become deeply invested in the dwarfs of Throal, and has done much more than they know on their behalf, including manipulating economic factors and rooting out Theran infiltrators. Icewing and Earthroot together work towards developing Throal as a viable alternative to Theran authority—one that is thoroughly under their claws. As Earthroot works below, protecting the White Tree and using his abilities to strengthen Throal's physical defenses, Icewing is carefully molding Throal into a major political force. He has offered up his counsel to Throalic leaders in person on several occasions, and they have gratefully accepted it, unaware of how he uses them. Many high-ranking officials and dwarfs of influence within Throal are quietly sponsored by Icewing, and subtly induced to further his goals by various means. Through careful channels he has been strengthening their relationships with Cara Fahd, the t'skrang aropagoi, and other major political entities—destroying more than one competitive influence in the process. His agents abroad work feverishly to dredge up support for his pets in the form of trade compacts, exchanges of lore, and aid against the Therans. While supportive of the dwarfs, he views them foremost as tools, and so takes care not to allow suspicion or resentment of Mountainshadow and Earthroot's influence among them to interfere with his plans.

The downfall of Thera is one of Icewing's primary motivations—perhaps symbolic to him in terms of rectifying past mistakes. The very existence of this empire is a thorn under his scales. Since Thera's inception, Icewing has hindered the Empire from both within and without by any means at his disposal. His intelligence regarding their activities is excellent, indicating that he has some very high-placed spies, perhaps even a member among the Heavenherds. He takes





this struggle personally, as he illustrated after the Therans' abortive attempt on his life, when a short time later he was so bold as to appear on top of the Sphinx on the Isle of Thera itself, his presence a warning that preceded a series of calculated strikes that forced the Therans to withdraw from conflict with the dragons. This example shows that Icewing is the most likely to become personally involved in a war against Thera. Likewise, when you choose to move openly against Throal, you will have to deal with Icewing first and foremost.

Servants

Icewing has a multitude of lackeys and spies, forming a personal power base that is quite formidable. As one of the progenitors of the drakes, he holds more on retainer than any other dragon. He also makes use of a number of spirits and spirit allies, as well as Name-giver pawns.

Drakes

I would estimate that Icewing has created more than thirty drakes, all of whom he uses as spies, messengers, and enforcers. Despite his interest in them, he has clearly not learned from the past, and fails to treat or inform them as favorably as he should. To his callous nature they are dolls to be used and discarded—he makes little attempt as I have to understand what he has wrought. Thus I found it easy to discover the one he sent to spy on me, a female Named Skarthan, and to turn the drake against him, for she had not been appreciated or understood by her former master. The key to my success was Icewing's own hypocrisy regarding my banishment for meddling in Name-giver affairs.

[If I may speak on Doll-Maker's behalf, I can attest that he does indeed care for and understand his drakes much better than the Outcast has been led to believe. My brother has in fact engaged the Outcast in an elaborate ruse, to which end the Outcast now believes he has recruited one of Doll-Maker's drakes. This foresight on my sibling's part has given us a position of advantage when we clearly are in need of one.]

Many of Icewing's drakes are well-disguised infiltrators, mostly hidden among the Therans but also among his other enemies, though he has none in Iopos that we do not know of. It is imperative that you be appraised of his more active agents, as I suspect they will soon be set loose upon your family.

Arondry

This drake most often takes Name-giver form as an elf. As an accomplished Seventh Circle wizard, he serves as Icewing's primary researcher into arcane lore, pattern items, and artifacts, and frequently travels afar throughout Barsaive and other lands, in search of knowledge and thread items.

Rathann

This restless drake acts as Icewing's wandering spy and troubleshooter. He is constantly on the move, looking and listening for things of interest to his master. He also serves as Icewing's primary liaison with adventurers and adept groups that Icewing hires (usually without their knowledge) for various missions to further his goals. Rathann most often appears as an elf with white hair, and is known in Throal as a Seventh Circle beastmaster.

Tellanion

Tellanion serves as Icewing's primary messenger to minions and other dragons. Should he be captured, the information that he is entrusted with would be most compromising to Icewing's plans in the right hands. His most common guise is that of a Dinganni human, and he is a talented Seventh Circle thief.

Crispell

One of Icewing's deep Theran agents, currently engaged in intelligence gathering in Vivane. Crispell usually appears as an enchanting Theran elf with red hair, and she is an Eighth Circle illusionist. I suspect the Therans are aware of her existence, but have yet to pinpoint who she is, as she is a master of subterfuge and deception, and uses many faces and Names.

Markik

Icewing's senior agent in Throal, Markik is an aide to the Ambassador General of the Throalic Diplomatic Corps, a position entitled to intelligence reports from the Eye of Throal and close to the King's ear. She takes form as a dwarf,





and is a skilled warrior as well as a negotiator. Were her position as a spy for Icewing to be revealed, it could very well strain the dragon's relationship with the dwarfs, and possibly fracture any trust between them.

Gichu-ta

This relatively young drake is being taught by Icewing himself in the arts of nethermancy. At the moment Icewing has engaged her in aiding the Liferock Rebellion in contacting the elemental spirit of the Ayodhya Liferock. I have reason to believe that Gichu-ta has most recently been in contact with members of a nethermantic order known as the Fellowship of Night, who lair somewhere in the Delaris Mountains.

Other Drakes

I know for a fact that Icewing uses at least two dozen other drakes in various capacities, yet this is not the place to detail them. If the need arises, I shall provide the information to you. I suspect many of them are prone to subversion, and can be turned to support our views and goals once Icewing's faults and hypocrisies are shown to them, as I have done with one already.

Name-givers

Icewing has not fostered communities of Name-giver servants as Mountainshadow or Earthroot has. Instead he relies primarily on a spy network run by an unidentified agent out of Kratas, and an assortment of adventuring adepts that he acts as an anonymous patron for. I am keeping a close watch upon their movements, as Icewing will soon direct some of them to oppose you and your plans. In particular, take note of tales concerning the following Name-givers.

House of the Spirit Wind

I have speculated for some time now that Icewing exerts some influence among the winged t'skrang, but I have yet to unearth evidence of such. I can attest to you that I myself have witnessed such t'skrang being used as envoys to the Throalic dwarfs and others, seemingly on missions that may well have been guided by Icewing's claws. At the least, it is something to ponder and investigate.

The Gilded One

I have yet to discern this t'skrang's Name, but it is important to Icewing's plans. He or she is a double agent of Icewing's within the Theran T'skrang House Carinci, currently stationed with House K'tenshin on the Serpent River. The Gilded One has much influence among the southern t'skrang aropagoi, and is particularly adept at feeding the Therans false information without raising suspicion. He or she has also been passing information on House K'tenshin ship movements and war plans to House Syrtis and V'strimon. I have reason to believe the Gilded One may have the ear of the Shivalahala K'tenshin as well, and is thus capable of some sway within that House.

Spiral

Few victims can Name Spiral as the source of their ailment, so wily and slippery is she. There are few places in Barsaive this windling thief and illusionist adept cannot penetrate. In fact, I suspect her of visiting one of my lairs a short time ago and leaving with a bauble that she mistook for something of value. I am confident that she will be the first pawn that Icewing will move against you, if she is not in Iopos already, having a look through your private vault. As a windling, however, she is cursed with many faults, and when she makes a mistake, I will make a snack of her.

Aechris' Arguers

The Arguers are a group of five ork and human adepts employed by Icewing for several years now, led by Aechris, a grizzled ork scout. They are so Named for their tendency to engage in loud, boisterous arguments, insult trading, and gahad-baiting, purely for the joy of it (and not always with each other). For several years now they have targeted and hindered the Theran slave trade, and they have recently recruited a liberator into the group. While subtle at times, they are frequently rowdy, and their legendary deeds are growing to a point where it shall be easy for you to track them. Currently they are raising a frenzy in Cara Fahd, in preparation for the war.

Brynn's Band

A group of seven diverse adepts skilled at kaer delving and other treasure hunting and exploratory activities. They have penetrated over a dozen kaers in Barsaive alone for Icewing, but they have recently been sent to the Great Isle of Thera, to retrieve a memory crystal known as the Rose Crystal. I suspect they have been (or will be) aided by one or





more of Icewing's agents in Thera, for even the most formidable group of adepts would be hard pressed to make off with such a prize. This item holds powerful significance for the Children of Alamaise, who revolted at the ending of the Age of Dragons. Why Icewing has chosen to attempt to retrieve the Rose Crystal at this time remains a mystery to me, as I see it as unlikely to aid his endeavors.

[Once again, I find myself most relieved that the Outcast is not aware of all our plans, especially our plans for the Rose Crystal. Given the relationship between the Denairastas and the Escalanas ranelle, were the Outcast to learn the truth behind the theft of the Rose Crystal, it would not be long before Alachia would know herself, spoiling our plans.]

Hunters

Recently, Icewing crossed paths with Verjigorm and his Cult of the Great Hunter, as several eggs from Icewing's clutch were stolen by cultists and nearly corrupted. Enraged by this atrocity, Icewing has assembled a coterie of horror stalkers to counter this threat to dragonkind. Their primary agenda is to root out the cult and any dragons or drakes they have corrupted. A bitter human horror stalker Named Aufji is coordinating their efforts. I suspect that Icewing, ever bold and direct and having failed to erase the taint placed upon one of the eggs stolen by the cult, is planning on using the egg to draw out the Cult and destroy it.

Spirits

Icewing has summoned and bargained with a number of powerful Named spirits that do his bidding, including unique spirits the like of which even potent magicians such as your family have never seen before. His strength in this realm should concern you, as their nature and abilities are elusive and difficult to defend against.

The most intriguing of Icewing's spirit allies is the one Named Ghost Scales. I strongly suspect that this is in fact the spirit of the dragon Yuichotol, killed by the Therans before the Scourge. Yuichotol mated with Icewing on more than one occasion, and she was as adept in manipulating spirit forces as he is. Together they enchanted a set of powerful soulstones, similar to those used by the nethermancers of the Hold of Courage in ancient Cara Fahd, so that if one should die, their spirit would remain, trapped within the stone. This transgression of dragon customs has yet to be atoned for. Her current state and powers are unfathomable to me, but I understand he has several magical constructs that allow her to speak and move. I would grieve to discover that one so great as she had sunken to become merely another doll of his.

[I understand there exists a difference of opinion on this matter between Doll-Maker, Ghost Scales and myself on one hand and many others on the other. May I remind you that at the last Council we allotted Ghost Scales a period of peace that she has not yet exhausted. Once that time has ended, we shall revisit the matter.]

Icewing's Lair

As you know, Icewing's primary lair is atop Mount Vapor, in the Throalic Mountains. Reaching the lair is a treacherous and difficult two-day trek up an icy crag. The lair itself is based around an ancient crater containing a field of hot springs, steaming steadily in the high mountain air, giving the mountain its Name. His sanctum is well-protected by layers of defenses, including a dome of elemental air. Foremost are the natural defenses inherent in the dangerous environment. The trail to his lair is hidden, and monitored by his minions, but its secrets have been given to many Name-givers. Without one to guide you, however, you could easily follow a false branch trail that will lead the unwary to certain doom by boulders, ice, traps or heights. Augmenting these dangers are an assortment of guardian spirits that will waylay the unwelcome, turning the mountain itself into a weapon of destruction. A number of wards and spells are also in place to misdirect, confuse, and create barriers to ensnare those attempting to enter his lair, and his drake and spirit guards will hastily descend upon those who run afoul of these traps.

The spirits of the Throalic Mountains themselves do Icewing's bidding, and can easily deter or destroy Name-givers who seek to enter his lair uninvited. Icewing also commands a small army of earth spirits and peculiar spirit-creatures known as crags to protect the lair and see to mundane tasks.

The lair lies only a few days' walk from Bartertown, and the trail is well worn by various adventurers and wisdom-seekers. Because of the dangers of Mount Vapor, few petitioners seek Icewing's lair without a guide; several of which sell their escorting services in the streets of Bartertown. They may be useful sources for information regarding the lair, if they are not in fact Icewing's servants.





Icewing's sense of superiority to the Young Races demands that he expect gifts from those that would approach his lair and speak to him. If a Name-giver cannot provide a token of esteem to Icewing at least one thousand silver pieces in value—a trifling amount to Icewing of course—then they are clearly not important or needy enough to demand his counsel. Those who dare to approach without an appropriate gift for the dragon are given a dire warning to return with one inside of a month, else they are tracked down and eaten by Icewing for offending one of his stature. Remember this, if you should ever need to draw him from his lair.

From Skarthan, his mistreated drake, I have determined the location of a secret lair in the Tylon Mountains. It is there that he now keeps his clutch of eggs, including those that have recently hatched. Icewing actually spends much time here, but when he is away, this lair is watched over by Skybright, a lesser dragon under Icewing's tutelage, and well protected by spirits as well.

Icewing also has at least two other secret lairs, one of which is in the province of Vivane. Determining where the others are would be most useful, as they will be less protected than Mount Vapor, and are more likely to contain information or objects of value, perhaps even pattern items, which can be turned against him.

Treasure

Foremost among the artifacts hoarded by Icewing is the Eye of All-Wings, twin to the one held by Mountainshadow. The Eyes, taken from All-Wings' body and contained within crystal spheres, are linked to each other through dragon magic that allows the two to communicate over great distances. As I explained when detailing Mountainshadow's hoard, the Eyes can also be used to scry distant lands and spy upon events there, and may be used to peer into the depths of the netherworlds. Fortunately, Icewing's gaze is almost certainly turned constantly towards the Therans, as their mobilization concerns him greatly. Keep it focused there, and the less chance he will have to counteract your moves.

In addition to the wealth of gold and jewels, including an impressive collection of memory crystals filled with ages worth of spirit lore, Icewing also maintains in his Mount Vapor caverns a magnificent garden which is home to the Glitterfrost Orchid of t'skrang legend. The bright, silvery-white blooms of the Glitterfrost Orchid are stunning to the eye, and magically dangerous to the most well armored creature. The touch of an Orchid bloom will crack open even a dragon's scales, creating an opening through which a mortal wound may be struck.

Icewing's Powers

One needs only to witness the speed of Icewing's talons and the hardness of his silvery-blue scales to attest that he is indeed a peer to Mountainshadow and progeny of All-Wings. Almost as large as his brother, Icewing is more physically aggressive, and could easily rend an obsidiman in two with a swipe of his tail or claws. His demeanor is hard, callous and fearsome, and his frosty gaze can cause the hardiest warriors to flee him in abject terror. The Therans lost a behemoth when they attacked his mate Yuichotol, and if Icewing had stayed to fight them openly they would likely have lost two more, so terrifying is Icewing with speed and fire and sorcery.

The most dangerous of Icewing's powers is the unique one that gives him his Name. While all dragons can use the mighty force of their wings to fling opponents aside, stunning them and leaving them open for the kill, Icewing can manipulate the elements themselves with his wingbeats. I once watched him from afar as he dueled with another dragon, an adult, who was so foolish as to challenge Icewing's claim to another's hoard. Icewing descended upon his opponent, his wings beating so furiously that they were but a flashing and blinding blur. A whirlwind of ice and snow churned forward, enveloping his foe and encasing him in an icy prison. The dragon immediately began to burn and tear himself free, but not before Icewing was upon him, ripping him open and slashing him apart. By the time the dragon had freed himself, Icewing had grievously injured him, and dispatched him shortly afterwards. Imagine that same power focused upon mortals, and you see its terrible potential.

Allies and Enemies

Icewing is much more comfortable with pawns than allies, but he is quite willing to work with other dragons if they share the same goals. Of late, there has been a flurry of communication between himself and three other great dragons, as they prepare for the upcoming conflict with Thera.





Mountainshadow

The minions of Icewing and his brother Mountainshadow make up the backbone of the dragon's network of spies, and the two communicate and cooperate on a multitude of affairs that they hold common interest in. Mountainshadow does not share the same depth of interest Icewing has in Throal, nor the hatred for Thera, but does not stray far from agreement with Icewing concerning the two. They use the Eyes of All-Wings to remain vigilant of the Therans' actions, and to communicate when necessary. Mountainshadow is more cautious in his approach to Name-givers, and frequently counsels his brother to do the same, though he is more than supportive of Icewing's doll-making.

Of important note is the interest that the pair have taken lately in Aardelea, a young human girl from a backwater village in Barsaive's hinterlands. I have recently learned of her importance, for she has bonded in some way with one of Icewing's blue spirits, and the dragons think now that she may hold the key to propagating drakes in the future. They are excessively protective of her, and even Icewing chose not to intervene as they see it crucial that she develop on her own, without interference. Of course, their secrecy was breached and because of their interest, the Therans have become involved and kidnapped the girl. If she is returned to Barsaive, we should acquire her, as anything of such importance to Icewing could only be useful in our hands.

[Icewing, Skarthan has done well in passing this information to the Outcast. She has clearly passed her latest test, and placed herself further within the Outcast's confidence. It will be most illuminating to see how the Outcast maneuvers in regards to this affair.]

Another thing to note in Icewing's relationship with Mountainshadow is a slight sense of jealousy I have felt in the past on Icewing's part towards his brother. While they have worked closely for ages, within the usual boundaries of dragon etiquette, there is undoubtedly a small rivalry at play—a competition of sorts between the two. In respects to this, take heed to Icewing's relationship with Mountainshadow's drake Rosper, who is currently chafing under his master's cautious and slow agenda with the Therans—Rosper's aggressive attitude fits more appropriately with Icewing, and I would not be surprised to see them drawn together. Under appropriate circumstances, I could direct Icewing's drake who now serves me to approach Rosper and play upon his alienation and anger... .

[The friction between Rosper and me is greatly exaggerated, and in this case, intentionally so. He has been hooked, my brother, time now to reel him in.]

Aban

Icewing and Mountainshadow also have something in development with Aban, and I fear they are looking to the north, possibly in Iopos' direction. Whatever they are discussing, they are being quite careful about it, so prepare for the worst.

Earthroot

Earthroot and Icewing have a mutual interest in the development of Throal as a major force in Barsaive. I have seen arguments flare between the two regarding minor details, but they are essentially allied in their goal, and when Throal becomes threatened by you, they will act in unison to protect their pets. Currently, Earthroot is focused on strengthening Throal's True Pattern by buttressing its physical and magical foundations, with the intent, of course, to protect the White Tree that lies beneath it. He is not so interested in developing Throal outwards, as Icewing is, and will care little if the dwarfs fail to exert a sphere of control, as long as the underground kingdom itself is not threatened. While Icewing will undoubtedly strike out to expand or protect Throal's power, he will not have Earthroot's backing.

Enemies

In Icewing's limited vision, the Therans are the True Foes and represent the greatest threat to him and dragonkind. He has personally seen and felt their power, and has antagonized them enough to make himself a primary target of theirs. They are well aware of his ill intent, and seek to anticipate and block his actions as best they can. Their hatred for each other should be used and exploited by you whenever possible, for the more they focus on their war, the less they will heed you, and the more damage they deal to another, the more weakened they shall be when you strike.

Do not expect Icewing to be consumed entirely in his plans for the Therans, however, for he is highly protective of Throal and will divert some of his attention to any who threaten it, such as yourselves. Expect him to attempt to flush





you out or force your hand soon, and be prepared for it. He is assuredly displeased with your family for assassinating his dwarf puppet king, and will not soon forget. It is to your credit that for some time at least you cast the blame upon the Therans, for that is a ploy that Icewing at least appreciated and possibly even fostered.

Icewing's Goals

Icewing's goals are numerous and varied, and I have touched upon only those that are foremost in his mind. Heed them well, as they each contain fault points that may be used by you to thwart or divert his plans. Icewing is as cunning and dangerous as Mountainshadow, only he will respond more quickly and be more bold in his intervention. Be cautious not to divert too many resources towards countering Icewing, for sure as Icewing will be the first dragon to strike at you, Mountainshadow will be watching and anticipating your moves and will use Icewing to distract you and camouflage his own actions.

Icewing's willingness to act directly and rashly does not endear him to the other dragons, and any mistakes he makes will move them towards cautiousness. If you can draw Icewing out, overextend and foil him, you may gain enough time to accomplish your goals while the other dragons are still pondering the situation.

The Downfall of Thera

This is a personal vendetta of Icewing's, and his endeavors in this area extend far outside of Barsaive. I know for a fact that Icewing has done much to support rebels and dissidents throughout the Theran Empire, even as he builds his own counter power to Thera with the dwarfs in Barsaive. Destroying this empire that his True Foes have built has become Icewing's passion, and he lusts for the means to expedite it.

Strengthening Throal

Having entrenched himself as a patron and advisor to the leaders of this kingdom, and infiltrated their numbers with his servants, Icewing expects to develop and direct Throal as a tool for the destruction of Thera and the recreation of the power structure that lasted throughout the Age of Dragons. The dwarfs are a crucial element in his long-term goals, and he will tolerate nothing that undermines their power.

Propagating Drakes

Icewing's greatest creation are the drakes that he uses so poorly, yet they are his pride. He is more than aware of their limitations and their inability to reproduce, and is still heavily engaged in researching solutions to these quandaries; to this end he is collaborating with Vasdenjas and Mountainshadow on several experiments. The girl Aardelea is of extreme importance to this, which explains his actions regarding her. His work with spirits is also significant to this, and he is still expanding his knowledge in this area so that he may yet pull forth some hints or answers from the netherworlds.

Destroying the Cult of the Great Hunter

Icewing is well aware of the plans the Horror known as Verjigorm has for dragonkind, as his submission to the Throalic book on Horrors details. Icewing is intensely interested in any information concerning the corruption of drakes and dragons by this foul entity and its servants. Having one of his own eggs tainted by this Horror's pawns has brought the danger home to him, and it is a lesson he will not idly forget. Icewing is not the sort to just wait and watch, and will actively spread what information he gains about the horror cult, as well as sponsor adepts and horror stalkers to track them down and destroy them.





USUN

[The Outcast's view of Vast Green clearly shows his strategy to divide us and thereby weaken us. We cannot allow this to happen. Whatever our own differences, we must look to our common enemies—the Impertinent Ones, the Outcast and his children—and remain unified. We must also remember the mistakes of the past and avoid repeating them.]

Usun is one of the most isolationist of all of the great dragons of Barsaive. He claims the Liaj Jungle as his, and woe betides any other Name-giver he catches there. This does not stop some Name-givers (like the legendary Tamers) from living in the jungle, but it certainly makes Usun and his motives mysterious to the outside world. Why does he dislike Name-givers? Why is he so solitary?

Usun is something of an exile himself, although not in the way I am. He firmly believes dragons should rightfully rule the world—and while many fellow great dragons agree with this, Usun has been staunchly opposed in his desire to war against all other Name-givers and subjugate them, as it was in the Age of Dragons. Failing that, he would see the Young Races wiped out, removed from the world so dragon strength and magic can shape it. The other great dragons consider Usun's plans both impractical and unacceptable. The Therans and other Name-givers have developed too much, and are too powerful to oppose in open warfare. Great dragons such as Icewing and Mountainshadow prefer to work behind the scenes, manipulating events to further their plans. Such machinations frustrate Usun, who has thus far agreed to abide by the will of the others and limits himself to the Liaj, where he takes out his frustrations on any Name-giver foolish enough to defy his ban on their entering the jungle.

As you read these words, you will undoubtedly notice certain similarities between Usun and Aban, the great dragon of the Mist Swamps. It is certainly true that the two do in fact share a number of traits, such as a preference for physical combat, use of spirits and creatures as their eyes and ears within their domains, and jealous guarding of their territories. Given these similarities, it is easy to think these dragons are two of a kind. Beware such faulty conclusions, for they could prove disastrous. Instead, I bid you notice the differences between Usun and Aban. They are subtle and not often obvious, but are key in developing strategies for dealing with each of these powerful creatures.

Usun's Nature

Usun is legend among the Name-givers of Barsaive, particularly those who live close to his home in the Liaj Jungle. He is fairly young by great dragon standards, although still older than any nation you might know. His great body is sleek and powerfully muscled, covered with overlapping scales of burnished green, like aged copper. His wings and underbelly are a paler green, allowing him to almost disappear into the jungle foliage. Usun's broad head is topped with a pair of horns twisted like those of a ram, and equipped with a set of powerful jaws with teeth honed by hunting and fighting.

Usun is a warrior and a hunter, known as Vast Green to other great dragons. He hearkens back to the predator heritage of our kind, savage and cunning. Where Mountainshadow or Vasdenjas might use honeyed words or subterfuge, Usun strikes with flame and claw and knows no mercy. The master of the Liaj Jungle has no use for words or diplomacy. He is a fighter who lives for the glory of battle, pitting his strength against the strength of the enemy. Since he has no enemies to fight, and cannot go to war against the Young Races as he might wish, Usun dwells in the Liaj Jungle, home to some of the most savage creatures in Barsaive. There he pits his strength and cunning against them in a daily struggle for life. No doubt Usun finds most of the creatures of the jungle a poor challenge for his abilities.

Unlike other great dragons, Usun has no interest in the Young Races as anything other than prey. While you might intrigue Icewing or Mountainshadow with clever words or tales, not so with Usun. He looks on all of the Young Races as you look upon the animals you slaughter for food, or perhaps more like the vermin you exterminate from your homes. Were it in his power, Usun would likely scour Barsaive with flame and reduce all of its cities to ash and rubble.

His savage warrior nature may cause you to underestimate Usun's cleverness. Do not forget that he is a great dragon, with more experience than has been accumulated by the entire Denairastas family line. Although Usun does not follow the intellectual pursuits of other great dragons, he is no less intelligent because of it. Usun knows much lore, and he collects information on the natural world, giving him a great understanding of the flora and fauna of Barsaive. Greater than that of Vasdenjas, I suspect, except Usun would never share his knowledge with outsiders as the "Master of Secrets" so often does.





The key to understanding Usun is his certainty of the superiority of dragonkind and his belief in the survival of the strongest creature. Do not fool yourself into believing that you can win his respect. No matter how strong you prove yourselves, you will always be lesser creatures in Usun's sight, unless you can overcome him, making the question moot. This is a weakness you can exploit. Usun believes all those who are not true dragons are weaker than he, and therefore underestimates them. Where you cannot win a straightforward battle, you may be able to win through craftiness and guile.

The Liaj Jungle

Usun's home in the vast expanse of the Liaj Jungle is a savage place suited to his nature. In fact, I am sure the presence of Usun has only helped to increase the constant struggle for life in the jungle, strengthening that aspect of its legend and its True Pattern.

The Liaj is a chaotic hunting ground where Usun maintains the old ways of dragon life, as even the strong find it hard to survive there, and very few are fit enough to live long. The great dragon's brood is expected to struggle for survival as the other creatures of the jungle must, and only the most vigorous are allowed to grow into adulthood. By engaging the younger dragons in this ultimate competition, he enhances their ferocity, and makes clear their natural superiority over other forms of life. Usun himself revels in the hunt and chase, as the many scars he bears stand testimony to.

Lying in a lush valley between the western mountains of Barsaive, the Liaj sees few visitors, unlike the Servos Jungle to the east. Few useful waterways or trade routes pass through the Liaj, and fewer Name-givers choose to defy Usun's ban on entering his jungle domain to live there. The jungle is given over almost entirely to the wildlife living there, which is as Usun prefers it. In the Liaj you will find fierce lions, felux, great serpents, bears, wild boar and small herds of jungle cattle that make a fine meal for a hungry dragon. There are also many wyverns lurking in the dark jungle undergrowth or coiled atop the great trees. This is a significant and important matter of which I will speak more of shortly.

Unlike some parts of Barsaive, the jungle has increased its growth since the Scourge. Rains have shifted away from Jerris and more water now falls onto the Liaj and surrounding region, allowing the jungle to spread its growth. This is partly the work of the Wastes and partly (I suspect) the power of Usun's magic. The jungle does not appear affected by the blight of the Wastes or the nearby Poison Forest, perhaps because the worst of the ash-fall is kept to the western side of the mountains and does not reach the jungle. Usun's magic almost certainly plays a role in keeping the jungle protected from such corruption, and few Horrors remain in the region thanks to Usun's hunting habits. From time to time, one of the twisted creatures from the far side of the mountains makes its way into jungle, but like most other visitors to this jungle, it is quickly dispatched by the master of the jungle himself.

The southern expanse of the Liaj is inhabited by varieties of giant insects and their kin. There are ants the size of small dogs, along with giant wasps and spiders as large as goats—or larger. These spiders spin vast, silk-lined lairs in the depths of the jungle and use their webs to capture jungle creatures to feed upon. Even small lions and similar beasts can be entangled in their silky strands, so you can imagine that Name-givers are fairly easy prey for these creatures. The presence of these insects helps to keep Name-givers away from the depths of the jungle, so Usun generally leaves them alone. The silk of the spider dens fetches a high price with the various merchants of Barsaive, being quite useful in the making of fine rope and woven goods. It is being traded primarily by the Overland Trading Company, owned by the obsidimen merchant Omasu. Omasu is, of course, the head of the Liferock Rebellion as well. Considering the harvesting of such silk could only be accomplished on a large scale with Usun's grace, it is not a great leap to discern that Omasu and his Rebellion are being aided by Usun, as they are opposed to the Therans in Barsaive. Considering this boost to the merchant's wealth and the coffers of the Liferock Rebellion, the matter should be investigated more fully, as you will likely cross paths with them soon.

The Tamers

Perhaps the most legendary, and the most curious, inhabitants of the Liaj Jungle are the Tamers. I'm certain you've heard tales of this tribe of Name-givers who live in the depths of the jungle without the use of tools or weapons of any kind. They live almost as animals, hunting and surviving on the strength of their bodies, wits and magic. They disdain all of the trappings of civilization, having their own customs and traditions. Most of the Tamers who are adepts follow the discipline of the Beastmaster, using their empathy with the jungle creatures to help them and their tribe persevere.





Despite Usun's views towards these primitives and his occasional snacking on them, the Tamers have ironically come to embrace Usun's philosophy. Perhaps it is merely coincidence, but the Tamer's believe firmly in the survival of the fittest. I suspect, however, that Usun has influenced them, for I have sensed a strange pride on his part towards them. He frequently sets his young upon them, weeding out the weak, but I suspect he is impressed by their perseverance and adaptability. They, in turn, seem to both respect and fear him, as they should. I suspect Usun would not be so condescending towards the Young Races if other Name-givers followed the Tamer's example.

It is also a possibility that the Tamers are some sort of experiment on Usun's part. Their culture is much like what the great dragon would like the Young Races to be: simple, primitive and fearful of him. Certainly Usun's presence in the Liaj has shaped the beliefs of the Tamers, and they could not survive in the jungle if Usun did not allow them to do so. What Usun's plans for them in the future, I cannot say.

Usun's Powers

Usun is a mighty opponent in battle. His scales are more resilient than any armor made by the Young Races and his teeth and talons are sharper than thrice-forged swords, able to rend other creatures apart with ease and tipped with a potent venom. For the most part, Usun is able to rely solely on his physical prowess to bring down even the most dangerous prey. His constant hunting has honed his fighting skills, marking him as one of the most formidable fighters among my kind. Few other great dragons could even aspire to best him.

Do not mistake his brawn for lack of intelligence or cunning, however, for Usun has not neglected his other powers. It is true that the master of the Liaj Jungle rarely makes use of his fiery breath, since the flames can destroy large areas of jungle growth with a single blast. Yet Usun has refined his breath to spew forth clouds of choking smoke that render the jungle as dark as night, or even to breathe flames that burn only what he wishes to burn. A blast of Usun's fire can burn an intruder to ash while leaving the surrounding jungle untouched. Despite this, Usun prefers to face opponents with fang and claw.

Disdainful of Name-givers, Usun rarely speaks in any Name-giver tongue, as languages of lesser races are beneath his stature. He prefers the use of dragonspeech, which has led many Name-givers to believe that Usun does not speak at all. Some Name-givers (mostly windlings) living near the jungle to refer to Usun as "the Silent One." Despite this reputation, Usun is more than capable of speaking—in a number of different languages—whenever he chooses, he simply prefers not to resort to such crude means.

As part of his development of dragonspeech, Usun has learned to use it to sense the emotions of other creatures near him—especially those he hunts. Usun certainly possesses the power of all great dragons to inspire fear and unreasoning terror in the hearts of all creatures who see him; the passage of Usun's shadow is said to paralyze other creatures with fear, pinning them to the spot like the passage of a hawk's shadow over a field mouse.

In addition to his empathic abilities, Usun has developed a great rapport with the creatures of the Liaj Jungle. He uses dragonspeech to command the creatures of the jungle and employ them as spies, servants and soldiers.

Usun does not possess the breadth of magical knowledge exhibited by great dragons such as Mountainshadow or Vasdenjas, but he does have considerable mastery of the arts of elementalism. Elemental magic allows Usun to control nearly every aspect of the Liaj Jungle to suit him. He can animate the trees and jungle vines to attack intruders, create rain and fog to shroud the jungle, and wield the powers of fire, ice, and earth as weapons. There is a great deal of elemental lore to be learned from Usun's magic, although wresting such secrets from him may be an impossible task.

Treasures

Like all great dragons, Usun keeps in the depths of his lair a hoard of treasures gathered over the years. Usun's true lair lies deep in the heart of the Liaj, among the ruins of the Name-givers who once dwelled there long ago. His lair is underground, deep beneath the roots of the jungle. There his treasure-hoard lies, consisting of great quantities of coins and jewels, most of them of a style unknown to the people of Barsaive. There are also memory crystals containing mystic lore and other knowledge gathered by Usun over the years. Invading Usun's lair would involve considerable risk for what might be only a small reward. Still, if members of the Tamers or adventuring adepts could be persuaded to do so, we might find things of use to us there.

Usun's greatest treasure, and greatest secret, remains unknown, even to me. All I've been able to learn is that Usun traveled out into the Wastes a number of times and returned with something to the depths of his lair. What it is, I





cannot say. It may be some creature that took Usun's attention, or perhaps something from one of the lost kaers in the bowels of the Wastes. It is unlikely the great dragon braved the hazards of the Wastes for a simple hunting expedition, when such a variety of prey lives within the jungle. Given his goals and attitudes, it is almost certain that the thing Usun sought is something dangerous to the other Name-givers of Barsaive—perhaps even the mysterious source of the Wastes itself.

This mystery, more than anything else, is cause for us to discover what treasures lay hidden in Usun's lair. Our agents need not even know what it is we seek. Let them sate their greed with the gold and silver in the lair, so long as we gain the information we want.

[Again, I am pleased to see the Outcast has not compromised all of our secrets and plans. Usun's braving of the Wastes and his contribution to our plan could come to nothing if the Denairastas discover it prematurely. We must take steps to prevent this from happening.]

Usun's Servants

Usun does not have servants in the way most great dragons do. With his disdain for the Young Races, Usun would not have any Name-giver in his presence, except as a meal. Usun's capabilities outside of his jungle domain are therefore limited, at least in relation to other great dragons and their carefully placed eyes and ears. He has no network of spies in the cities of the province, no Name-giver informants to pass on messages or other information.

Creatures

The majority of Usun's servants are the creatures of the Liaj Jungle themselves. Using the power of dragonspeech, Usun commands the jungle creatures to do his bidding and can even perceive through their senses. In this respect he is much like a beastmaster adept, though one of significant power and ability. Much of the savagery of the jungle creatures may stem from Usun's influence. Travelers in the Liaj who are attacked by jungle creatures may in fact be facing Usun's guardians, seeking to repel or test the intruders at their master's command. You may feel the sensation of being watched in the Liaj Jungle, as many Name-givers do. If so, it is likely the eyes of Usun upon you, watching through the numerous creatures of the jungle. An innocent appearing bird or scurrying creature may serve as Usun's spy. Many of the Young Races say Usun sees all in the jungle, and they are quite correct.

Spirits

Usun is also served by the various elemental spirits at his command. His mastery of the elements allows the great dragon to summon many different spirits to do his bidding. Elemental spirits serve as Usun's prime agents outside of the Liaj Jungle, able to travel swiftly through astral space to perform tasks for their master, such as carrying information to other dragons in the distant reaches of Barsaive or reporting on various events or happenings.

Usun most often calls upon air and wood spirits, less often on earth and most rarely calling on water or fire spirits. Unlike elemental spirits summoned by other Name-givers, Usun's spirits rarely assume a form resembling any of the Young Races. Instead they appear as jungle creatures, made up of the spirit's prime element. Air spirits appear as great raptors, wood spirits as trees or collections of vines. Earth spirits appear as great bears, similar to brithan. Fire spirits take the form of great cats while water spirits appear like serpents. The dragon's elemental servants are usually quite powerful for their kind, enough to give most enemies cause for concern. Still, a skilled enough magician could potentially subvert a spirit controlled by Usun and gain valuable information in doing so.

I have heard tales of Usun commanding powerful Named spirits from time to time, but I cannot say if they are true. I have never seen Usun do so, nor have I encountered a Named spirit commanded by him, but I must concede that it is at least possible. With his command of lesser spirits, Usun may have other powerful spirit allies at his command.

Drakes

For quite some time, Usun made no use of drake servants. Usun distrusts servants, and thus created no drakes to serve for him. The few drakes seen in the depths of the Liaj Jungle were those of other dragons, sent on errands to the master of the jungle. The creatures and spirits serving Usun were enough for him.





However, since the arrival of the Theran fortress at Lake Ban, Usun has reconsidered his attitude towards drakes and has begun creating drakes of his own deep in his lair. Tales have reached me of several drakes in the depths of the Liaj, serving their creator and master. This recent project must have cost Usun a considerable amount of strain, time and effort. Reports of his hunting in the jungle have become increasingly rare in the past months, indicating that Usun is spending time creating new drakes and perhaps working other magic to protect his domain and aid his fellow dragons against the Theran Empire.

Relations with Dragonkind

It can easily be said that Usun has no allies among his fellow great dragons, but that is a dangerous generalization. Usun's views are not shared by most of his fellow great dragons, that is sure, and Usun has little skill at diplomacy or accommodation with those who do not share his views. His beliefs have alienated him from the bulk of dragon society, although not to the same degree that mine have isolated me.

Still, for all his beliefs, Usun is loyal to dragonkind and follows the dictates of the majority. Unlike me, Usun has not been willing to take the final step, to follow through with his beliefs, with all that entails. He knows it would lead to exile and no matter how much he acts the part of the lone rogue, he still needs the support and approval of his fellow great dragons.

As things stand now, Usun is poised on the brink. His beliefs have effectively isolated him from his brethren, and the efforts of the other great dragons have frustrated him at every turn. For many years he has remained aloof from the affairs of the world outside his lair. Now the actions of the Therans and his fellow great dragons may draw Usun out of his jungle world and back into the concerns of Barsaive. That cannot be allowed to happen. Already Usun has been making plans to aid Mountainshadow's spies and operatives against the Therans. If the other great dragons are able to channel Usun's aggression towards the Young Races against the Theran Empire, they will be able to control and satisfy Usun while at the same time gaining an ally against the Therans. This is a dangerous combination.

However, it might be possible to convince Usun to take the extra step, to break with dragon tradition and follow through with his beliefs and his desire to see the Young Races subjugated or else scoured from the face of Barsaive. If Usun can be provoked into rash action against Name-givers of Barsaive (other than the Therans or Iopos), perhaps in the mistaken belief that he is striking at agents or allies of the Empire, then his fellow great dragons will have little choice but to turn against him. They cannot allow such an impetuous force to disrupt their carefully laid plans, so they would seek to exile Usun if he threatened them. Usun will never accept exile. I know him. He is too tied up in the old ways and beliefs and would rather die in battle. If backed into a corner, Usun will strike, forcing the other great dragons to eliminate him. In this way, we can deal with a potential threat and use our enemies to weaken their own ranks by setting them against each other.

[As I have said, I hope such a transparent ploy could never succeed. However, the Denairastas (and the Outcast) are well known for subterfuge and trickery. Such an attempt to turn us against one another could come in many guises and many forms. We must not allow our enemies or our own quarrels to divide us or divert us from the goal of dealing with the Impertinent Ones. We must be careful to address issues and grievances that arise in a principled fashion, and investigate them thoroughly for attempted deceptions.]

Although he has no real allies among his peers, the great dragons, Usun does have allies (and potential allies) among his own kind. To further his agenda of dragon supremacy and to spread his views, Usun has been very agreeable about taking in clutches of eggs to protect and raise. The remoteness of the Liaj Jungle and Usun's staunch defense of draconic traditions have drawn many females to leave their eggs in his care. Usun raises the hatchlings with a clear understanding of dragon history and tradition, as well as a strong belief in their birthright to rule over all other Name-givers. He ruthlessly tests the younglings to weed out the weak and incapable. The rest are the next generation of Usun's followers. Dragons take the long view, and in a matter of centuries, Usun may well become the leader of a powerful philosophy among his own kind.

The Liaj Jungle is known to be the home to many wyverns, the first progeny of Usun since the Scourge to near maturity. Life in the jungle forces the wyverns to be tough, strong and cunning in order to survive. The dragons who Emerge to Name themselves will be warriors and hunters like their guardian. In as little as a few decades, Usun may have a powerful force of dragons to call his own.

[The idea that those dragons raised by Usun will automatically follow his beliefs shows that the Outcast has spent too much time among the Young Races. Although young dragons are influenced by their sire, it is not our way to follow blindly (or else so





many recent events would have gone more smoothly). Each dragon chooses his or her own path, and Usun's guidance in our ways and customs is well known and honored. Let us not be distracted from the matter before us by such misguided opinion.]

Usun's Goals

Take time to consider and understand Usun's goals carefully. They are not like the goals of other great dragons, and are quite unique to him. In understanding these goals, you gain a greater understanding of Usun himself. Use your knowledge to anticipate how he will react and what you can do to turn his reactions to your advantage.

Survive and Prosper

Usun's utmost goal is survival. For Usun, survival is a goal in and of itself. In his view, life is a constant fight for supremacy, and he is therefore unlikely to do anything that will endanger his own survival or his ability to further his goals. Certainly, he will make no great sacrifices in dealing with the Therans or other Name-givers, nor will he seek to aid the Young Races in any way. Usun wants war against the Young Races, and he will gladly destroy the Therans with impunity, but he will not give the kind of aid or advice that Icewing or Vasdenjas are known for. Appeal to Usun's survival instinct and you hold his greatest desire in your hands.

Protect the Liaj Jungle

Like all of our kind, Usun is highly territorial, perhaps even more so than most dragons. He protects the boundaries of the Liaj Jungle fiercely, and scant few intruders manage to escape his notice. Those who do survive often return with frightening tales of Usun's power, and I suspect those Name-givers are allowed to live specifically so they can spread their stories and increase Usun's legend.

Usun also seeks to protect his true lair deep in the heart of the jungle and whatever secrets he may have hidden there. A threat to the jungle or his lair would serve to immediately draw his attention and prevent him from interfering with other affairs. Such a feinted threat or ploy must clearly come from a source other than us if it is to succeed.

Further the Cause of Dragon Supremacy

Despite bowing to the will of his fellow great dragons, Usun has by no means abandoned his belief in the supremacy of dragonkind or that it is the ultimate destiny of dragons to rule over the Young Races once again. He seeks to spread his philosophy among his peers and, more importantly, actively agitates among the younger generation of dragons and hatchlings who may guide dragonkind in the future. Usun is far from agreement with other dragons on what is to be done regarding the Theran Empire and other nations of Name-givers. Supporting Usun's views may lead to a schism among the great dragons and may push Usun towards taking the final step and defying the edicts of his peers. When dealing with Usun, appeal to his arrogance and superiority and you have a way to direct him.

Punish the Enemies of Dragonkind

Usun is a warrior and, like all warriors, he craves battle and seeks to fight those who are enemies of him and his kind. For Usun, the way to deal with all enemies of dragonkind is not through guile or subtlety, but through quick, decisive and deadly action. Usun was a strong supporter of acting against the Theran Empire before the Scourge. When the Therans attacked us to protect their control over the Rites of Protection and Passage (as if stolen magic was their own property), Usun's voice was loudest in calling for retribution.

When the Therans first returned to Barsaive after the Scourge, Usun wanted to destroy them outright, keeping Barsaive out of their hands (no doubt so he and other dragons could control it one day). But at that time, the other great dragons were content to sit by and watch, pulling strings from behind the scenes. The Empire was no direct threat to them at that time.

Now, with war brewing in Barsaive, Usun might at long last get his wish. He has been working arcane magic in the depths of the Liaj to prepare for the conflict he has waited for so long. In addition to creating drakes to gather information for him, I suspect Usun is working enchantments on the jungle itself, and gathering wyverns and flying creatures to attack Theran airships. Usun is a powerful weapon being primed to unleash against the Theran Empire.





VASDENJAS

[I hope the Outcast's profile of Talespeaker might provide the "Master of Secrets" with some insight into how it feels to have your secrets given out to others without your permission. Telling tales and the keeping of lore are important. Providing information to the Young Races is also a worthwhile activity, provided it is the right information, given at the right time. There are, however, some stories best left untold.]

Vasdenjas, the author of **Creatures of Barsaive** and other essays for the Great Library of Throal, is the only great dragon (other than myself) to share any substantial portion of his knowledge with other Name-givers. Apart from Icewing, Vasdenjas is the only great dragon the dwarf kingdom of Throal has had any significant open contact with, and the so-called Master of Secrets is a good deal more forthcoming than Icewing, for reasons of his own.

Vasdenjas' Nature

Vasdenjas, the Master of Secrets, the Terrible, the Eater of Cities, called Talespeaker by dragonkind, is a meddlesome gossip and storyteller, something akin to a dragon troubadour. Vasdenjas is one of the most learned and scholarly of the great dragons of Barsaive. He is the Loremaster of Barsaive's dragons, a very important role among dragons. Loremasters are those who keep records of the history and stories of our kind, passed on from the time of Nightslayer and Dayheart, the First Dragons. Loremasters learn, maintain and pass on knowledge from one generation of dragons to the next. They also serve as Keepers of the Rites, ensuring that the etiquette and traditions the great dragons have developed are adhered to. Since the death of Barsaive's last Loremaster, Thermail, Vasdenjas has performed admirably in this position, and has even taken his role a step further—a step not all of his fellow dragons agree with.

Like Mountainshadow and Icewing, Vasdenjas believes we dragons have something of a responsibility to the Young Races. Unlike Mountainshadow, Vasdenjas has very little curiosity about Name-givers—he knows all that he needs or cares to know about them. Unlike Icewing, he has little patience for meddling in Name-giver affairs. Instead, Vasdenjas believes in passing on knowledge and lore to the Young Races to help guide and educate them in the wonders of the world. He truly loves to pontificate and to hear the sound of his own voice, going on endlessly about nearly any topic. Vasdenjas considers himself an expert on nearly everything, someone who can offer guidance to the foolish and limited Name-givers of Barsaive. He has no interest in learning from them in return, as Mountainshadow claims to do.

Despite his desire to share information with the young races, Vasdenjas is still a traditionalist. He believes other Name-givers should be subservient to dragons and that they should be educated, guided, and controlled like children. Like virtually all other dragons aside from myself, Vasdenjas does not realize (or is not willing to acknowledge) the potential of the Young Races.

At the same time, Vasdenjas is also a hypocrite. He argues and pontificates against the experiments conducted by the Young Races to produce creatures such as hell hounds or nagas and rails against the magician who created the hydra, ignorant of the fact that the magician is in fact one of my first progeny and one of your earliest ancestors. He denounced me for creating what he called an abomination, and joined with the others in casting me out for my terrible crime of daring what they dared not do. Yet Vasdenjas is one of the most skilled in tampering with life of any of the great dragons. He is a master of creating drakes, and even now he is communicating with Mountainshadow and Icewing about the unique nature of the human girl Aardelea. I suspect he is growing eager to exploit her and seek new ways to bend life to suit his and other dragons' needs.

Vasdenjas' greatest assets are clearly his mind and his clever tongue, which he uses to worm his way into the attention of Name-givers. In body he is not the most powerful of great dragons, and prefers to avoid physical conflict when necessary. He talks his way from fights when he can, and is thought by some dragons to be almost afraid of battle, if such a thing could be said to be true of a great dragon. Though he hunts well enough, he claims to be above our ancient struggles and physical conflicts, much as you might expect from a scholar or wordsmith from one of the Young Races.

Still, Vasdenjas is a great dragon, with all that entails. He is larger than any newly Named dragon, as large as a small air galleon. His scales are a dun color, fading to yellow on his wings and almost eggshell color on his belly. They match the colors of the stone where Vasdenjas prefers to rest. His horns are fairly straight, curving slightly back from his head along his neck. Vasdenjas has sharp talons and teeth, although he uses them only to hunt, rarely slaying any intruders in his lair.





Mount Wyrmspire

Vasdenjas lairs atop Mount Wyrmspire, a high peak in the Scythan Mountains in the north of Barsaive, at the eastern edge of the Blood Wood. As you know, that peak is where the great dragon Thermail impaled herself in grief after some of the eggs she was tending were stolen and transformed into the first hydra. Though not known to my fellow great dragons, the magician who stole Thermail's eggs was one of the first of my children. Thermail was one of the strongest proponents of my exile, and she claimed the right to destroy my "misbegotten" children. She devoured them all, your great ancestors, all save one who I had concealed far away. Shortly after my exile, I told him of the fate of his brothers and sisters and, when the time was right, he went to Thermail and worked his way into her confidence. She was fond of telling tales and entertaining other Name-givers, much as Vasdenjas is now, and the two of them were very close once, I believe.

When the time was ripe, your Honored Ancestor made his way into the lair of Thermail and took seven of her newly hatched eggs, those she guarded so carefully. With my assistance, he used those seven eggs to create the first hydra, a true "abomination" for the great dragons to rail against. Thermail showed her weakness by turning against the Young Races of Barsaive, then impaling herself high atop Wyrmspire. It was at this time that the role of Loremaster of Barsaive was passed onto Vasdenjas.

[Talespeaker, before you act, I implore you take heed to caution and restraint. This disturbing claim of the Outcast's must be fully verified before any action is taken, else we fall prey to goading and deception. If it proves true, the atrocity he takes responsibility for affects all of our kind, and should best be dealt with in Council.]

In honor of her, and because of his assumption of Thermail's role as Loremaster, Vasdenjas moved his lair to Wyrmspire, and took in the remaining eggs Thermail guarded to raise them himself. Eventually, he also adopted Thermail's habit of entertaining and speaking with other Name-givers, passing on knowledge and lore to them.

Not long after he settled in at Wyrmspire, Vasdenjas sought to aid the nearby dwarf kingdom of Scytha against the coming of the Scourge. He invited Scythan scholars and magicians to speak with him in his lair, to pass on secrets to them which might allow them to survive the coming of the Horrors. Naturally, the Theran Empire could not allow dragons to freely give Name-givers the secrets the Therans sold so dearly. Theran agents stirred up anger among the residents of Gateway, a city built outside the gates of Scytha (much as Bartertown sits beside Throal). The inhabitants of the city, against the advice of the Scythan King, attempted to drive Vasdenjas from his lair. In retribution for the attack, Vasdenjas destroyed the city and burned it to the ground, and he spoke no more with the dwarfs of Scytha, who all but died out during the Scourge. This show of draconic power, along with the slayings of many Therans and the appearance of Icewing on the Sphinx of Thera itself, dissuaded the Therans from trying anything further against the dragons of Barsaive. If you ever doubt the power Vasdenjas wields, remember why he is called "the Eater of Cities."

Since the Scourge, Vasdenjas has once again permitted Name-givers to visit his lair, particularly those of the Great Library of Throal. One such scholar, Named Tiabdjin the Knower, has all but taken up residence with Vasdenjas, serving as scribe for the Loremaster. It was Tiabdjin who scribed the Creatures of Barsaive tome in the Great Library, and it was he who transcribed Vasdenjas' most recent addition to that library, a treatise on our kind. When he entertains visitors, Vasdenjas listens to tales and lore from far and wide and answers questions for some of the scholars who come to petition him. Some of the information Vasdenjas has revealed, particularly his recent treatise on dragons and dragonkind, has not met with the approval of his peers, although the great dragons have not taken any action against him other than informal rebukes.

Those scholars who wish to speak to Vasdenjas have a difficult journey, since Wyrmspire is a high mountain, and the narrow passes leading to the peak are treacherous, even in the best weather. The mountain lair is also located near the remains of the Kingdom of Scytha, a place most Throalic dwarfs (and many other Name-givers) consider cursed and Horror-touched. As it is, Vasdenjas receives fairly few visitors, but still far more than most other great dragons.

Vasdenjas' Powers

The Master of Secrets is, as his title implies, a scholar and keeper of lore. Though not quite as learned as his elder, Mountainshadow, Vasdenjas is a vast storehouse of knowledge from throughout the centuries, stretching back across the Ages. His store of wisdom is the dragon's greatest power and, perhaps, his greatest weakness.





His physical prowess is considerable, but unremarkable for a great dragon. Vasdenjas can destroy a city if he chooses, but physical conflict is not normally his way, preferring to avoid it whenever possible. The Master of Secrets excels instead in activities connected to his pursuit and love of knowledge: magic and an understanding of Patterns.

Vasdenjas has great magical skills, some of the best among the great dragons of Barsaive. His knowledge is not as great as that of Mountainshadow, but it is far greater than any magician of the Young Races. Vasdenjas knows spells of wizardry, nethermancy and illusion, and perhaps some of elementalism as well. I would estimate his magical power and knowledge rivals my own, if indeed it doesn't exceed it. Like all of our kind, Vasdenjas certainly knows spells and enchantments he keeps to himself, although he may share them with his small brood of younger dragons. Great magical lore, preserved on memory crystals, may be hidden among the jewels and gems of the dragon's treasure hoard, more valuable than any gemstone or coin could ever be.

As skilled as Vasdenjas is in magic, he is even more skilled in the use of dragonsight. He earned the Name Master of Secrets from his ability to see what others would keep hidden, to use dragonsight to penetrate into the deepest and most complex of Patterns and understand them. It is his understanding of Patterns that causes Vasdenjas to be so interested in knowledge. Knowledge is power, and to know something is to begin to understand its Pattern, its true self. Knowledge is the key to unlocking the secrets of a pattern, and Vasdenjas has over the centuries become a master locksmith.

As you might expect, Vasdenjas is quite skilled in working thread magic of all kinds. He is also skilled in more powerful pattern magic. He has become adept at the creation of life, forming new patterns out of the formless energy of astral space. He has spent many years working with Icewing, and has become an expert in the Dance of Blue Spirits. In recent years he has experimented on this drake creating ritual and refined it significantly.

Treasures

Although his treasure hoard is vast, filled with coins, gems and enchanted items, Vasdenjas has only two treasures of any importance to him: knowledge and the eggs under his care.

The lair of the Master of Secrets is littered with memory crystals filled with the lore of the ages—the history, customs, magic and rites of dragonkind, as befits his role of Loremaster. Scattered among the pretty baubles and stones of his hoard is information beyond price. To the eyes of other Name-givers they are no more than gemstones, some of them even less desirable than the common jewels in his lair. In truth, the value of the memory crystals is considerable, and although Vasdenjas' lair may be more accessible than that of some of his brethren, like all dragons, he guards his treasure well. Gaining possession of any of Vasdenjas' secrets will be a difficult task at best.

Vasdenjas also cares for many eggs and many hatchlings in and around his mountain lair, and delights in his duty as guardian of the young. What better role for a dragon who loves to teach to a captive audience? Vasdenjas goes to great lengths to teach the hatchlings under his care all of the lore he can, to instill in them a love of knowledge. He also tries to protect them from the dangers of the outside world for as long as possible, although even he must eventually allow the hatchlings to fend for themselves in the wild. Even then, he tries to protect them, misleading the readers of **Creatures of Barsaive** about the true nature of wyverns and working to dissuade any Name-givers from hunting wyverns by playing up their fierce and deadly nature. It could be that Vasdenjas still feels indebted to Thermail, and hopes to protect other hatchlings as she could not protect hers.

Vasdenjas' Servants

Vasdenjas has no lack of servants, both willing and unwitting. The Master of Secrets knows well that knowledge grants power directly as well as indirectly. The lore Vasdenjas has collected and given out gives him considerable influence over many Name-givers in Barsaive and elsewhere.

Name-givers

Vasdenjas has few knowing Name-giver servants. Still, he welcomes and speaks with more of the Young Races than any other great dragon, with the possible exceptions of Mountainshadow and his community of pet Name-givers, and Icewing, who makes himself available to those offering a suitable price. Those who visit with Vasdenjas invariably pass information on to him, acting as his eyes and ears in the world outside. Travelers speak to the great dragon and





provide him with news, never knowing what trivia might catch Vasdenjas' attention. I know that he has even availed himself of the Great Library of Throal from time to time, entering it in dwarf form to read books and see what the dwarfs have learned.

Those who listen to Vasdenjas become his agents in one way or another. No matter how generous he may appear, the Master of Secrets does not give his knowledge away for nothing. Already his minor efforts have endeared Vasdenjas to the scholars of the Great Library of Throal and thereby to the kingdom itself. The dwarfs turn to Vasdenjas and Icewing for their wisdom and the two dragons can pull the strings they have tied to their dwarf playthings and make them dance to their tune. Dwarf scholars can often go places and see things difficult for a great dragon to investigate personally. That knowledge is often passed on to Vasdenjas, an "exchange of information," as the Master of Secrets prefers to call it. An exchange where Vasdenjas comes out ahead in the end.

Vasdenjas—like other dragons—is also not above hiring mercenaries or adventurers when it serves his needs. Such arrangements are always made discreetly, usually by one of Vasdenjas' drake servants. Such hired parties never even know their true employer is a dragon, and their information is often passed on to Mountainshadow's spy network or to another of Vasdenjas' guests.

Creatures

Although he is fairly knowledgeable about the fauna of Barsaive and other lands, Vasdenjas makes little use of creatures as his servants. He prefers the company and the service of Name-givers and other intelligent beings like drakes over beasts. Usun and Aban's use of creatures to protect their respective domains is a pet peeve of Vasdenjas', who prefers to put on a more "civilized" appearance, perhaps even mimicking the ways of the Young Races he interacts with so often.

He does employ the services of spirits from time to time, generally minor tasked spirits to perform simple errands. From time to time, Vasdenjas will call upon more powerful and complex spirits as part of some experiment in the nature of patterns and life. These spirits may have any number of different powers and abilities as created by Vasdenjas.

Drakes

Vasdenjas is highly skilled in the creation of drakes, melding aspects of the patterns of dragon and Name-giver through complex rituals. One of the prime reasons I believe Vasdenjas sided with those against me in the end was his belief that the drakes are far better suited as servants, as they combine the best aspects of dragon and Name-givers. Perhaps also he fears the lack of control that dragons have over dragon-kin—you are able to reproduce as you wish, where drakes only propagate through magic, and are thus thoroughly under the dragons' sway. Certainly this relates to his interest in Aardelea, but whether he views her as threat, an opportunity, or merely a curiosity, I do not know. All I can say without doubt is that Vasdenjas masters hypocrisy as well as secrets; for one who denounced me so readily, he continues to tamper with life and patterns with impunity.

Vasdenjas has many drake servants, although very few of them are ever seen by other Name-givers; at least, not that any of the Young Races are aware of. In truth, Vasdenjas sees fewer visitors than other people believe. Many of the "visitors" reported entering the dragon's lair are actually drakes in Name-giver form returning to see their master. These drakes are never in evidence when Vasdenjas has true Name-givers visiting his lair, allowing the Master of Secrets to maintain an appearance of solitude and simplicity. Despite their absence, I am certain the drakes remain close by. I suspect they remain hidden in the depths of his lair or else vacate and roam the Scythia Mountains, hunting and exploring.

Vasdenjas keeps his drakes occupied with traveling around Barsaive, often in Name-giver form, gathering information for their master. Much of the lore Vasdenjas acquires comes from these drake spies, whom the dragon calls "travelers." Those who hear him speak of these travelers assume Vasdenjas hears tales from wandering or adventuring Name-givers and think nothing more of it. In truth, his eyes and ears are everywhere, gathering intelligence for their master before journeying back to Wyrmspire.

Discovering the Names and identities of Vasdenjas' drakes would be most useful in learning more about his information network, which has no doubt been helping Mountainshadow's spies against the Theran Empire and all other "enemies of dragonkind."





Allies and Enemies

His tendency to give information freely to the Young Races has not endeared Vasdenjas to his fellow dragons. Still, he does not really have any enemies among the great dragons of Barsaive. The more isolationist dragons, like Aban and Usun, would have preferred a stronger punishment for Talespeaker's lapses in judgment, but they still wish him no malice. Usun might want to see Vasdenjas humbled, but would not wish him harmed. Vasdenjas is no threat to his fellow dragons, merely a loose-lipped scholar.

Other great dragons, like Mountainshadow, Icewing and Earthroot, consider Vasdenjas somewhat careless, but respect his knowledge and the work he has done in creating goodwill between the kingdom of Throal and dragonkind. Vasdenjas' voice still carries weight with his peers, and his opinions are always listened to, even if others do not agree with them. None of these dragons have been especially close allies of Vasdenjas in the past, but the formation of Mountainshadow's spy network may have changed things. At the least, Vasdenjas is quite active in aiding the goals and work of these spies, making him important to future plans in Barsaive.

Some of Vasdenjas' strongest allies are the hatchlings he has raised, particularly Thermail's three remaining hatchlings, saved by Vasdenjas and taken into his lair years before the Scourge. These dragons—all having recently reached adulthood—are staunch supporters of their former guardian. All of them live in the Scythan Mountains and pass on any information they obtain to Vasdenjas.

The first is named Hydra's Bane, a female with dusky blue scales and ivory claws and horns. She chose her Name as part of her desire to rid Barsaive of hydras, created from the bodies of her egg-mates. Hydra's Bane hunts hydras and gathers information about them, perhaps in hope of reversing or altering the magic used to create them. She is a traditionalist and believes hydras to be an affront to all dragons. Although her obsession might make Hydra's Bane subject to the right manipulation, she could become an implacable enemy if she is able to tie the creation of hydras to your clan. Tread carefully where she is concerned.

Greissval is a male with milky colored scales and eyes that are burning pits of reddish fire, a draconic albino. He is known as the "Phantom Dragon" and the "Ghost of Scythia" to some Name-givers who have seen his pale form flying high above the mountains by the light of the full moon. Greissval is taken with studying the pattern of ancient Scythia and the fall of the dwarf kingdom there. He collects trinkets and treasures recovered from the Scythan tunnels, and lairs in a forgotten dwarf outpost high in the mountains. He has been known to hire adepts from time to time to recover items lost in the depths of the ruins or scattered across Barsaive by the Scythan flight before the Scourge. He has considerable skill in nethermancy and the study of astral space.

The last of Thermail's surviving hatchlings is Lotiara, a female who lives in a valley in the southern peaks of the Scythan Mountains. She follows her guardian's example by speaking often with Name-givers, mostly to exchange information and to listen to the stories travelers are able to tell her. Since Lotiara is barely an adult, her wisdom is not sought after like Vasdenjas, but she still has considerable knowledge compared to any Name-giver scholar. Lotiara also has something of a knack for understanding patterns, and many adepts seek her out for aid in unraveling the secrets of powerful or puzzling thread items. Lotiara emulates Icewing by asking for a suitable gift in exchange for the information, although her standards vary widely based on the petitioner and her opinion of them.

Among the Young Races, Vasdenjas' closest ally is the kingdom of Throal. The Master of Secrets has aided the Great Library on several occasions, providing rare and valuable lore to add to their collection. Although his influence over Throal is nowhere near as great as that of Icewing or Earthroot, Vasdenjas does have some hooks planted in the Great Library, allowing him to call upon its resources and scholars for help from time to time. The kingdom is certainly well disposed towards the Master of Secrets, since he has never been anything except friendly and courteous towards them.

There is a tiny fraction of the Throalic population that is not well disposed towards Vasdenjas. The descendants of the Scythans who fled their doomed kingdom still tell stories about Vasdenjas the Terrible, the Eater of Cities. Indeed, I believe it was they who made the title plural—the tales growing in the telling. To these former Scythans, Vasdenjas is a terrible creature, an enemy of all Name-givers. Many believe it was the dragon, and not the Horrors, who cursed and doomed their lost kingdom, or perhaps the dragon working in concert with Horror allies. While I am certain the destruction of Scythia was no fault of Vasdenjas', the beliefs of these dwarfs may be useful in painting the Master of Secrets in an ill light. If one of these Name-givers can be turned fanatical enough to start an anti-Vasdenjas cult or take some other action against the dragon, so much the better.





Vasdenjas has no other allies or true enemies among the Name-givers of Barsaive save the Theran Empire, an enemy all of the dragons share. The Master of Secrets was once well known in the region around Landis in the centuries before Thermail's death and the coming of the Scourge, but all of the kingdoms he once visited are now dust and ruins. Vasdenjas has expressed a certain admiration for the orks who have recently refounded Cara Fahd, and they are certain to seek him out soon for information on their ancient kingdom. The orks are eager to reclaim their past, and Vasdenjas can provide them with a library of leads, tales, and clues to begin their quests with. I suspect that Vasdenjas already has drakes among them, gathering information and influencing Krathis Gron and her followers. If so, Vasdenjas may yet become to Cara Fahd what Icewing has become to Throal, a development that should be ferreted out and prevented.

Vasdenjas' Goals

Vasdenjas keeps his own council where his plans are concerned. The one thing Vasdenjas does not discuss openly are his own goals. Still, I once knew Vasdenjas quite well and his goals are clear to anyone with the eyes to see them.

Gather and Preserve Lore

As Barsaive's Loremaster, Vasdenjas seeks to gather and preserve knowledge, especially knowledge relating to dragonkind: our rituals, rites, history and culture. I suspect Thermail's death affected Vasdenjas especially because both loved to collect lore, and Vasdenjas considered it a great tragedy to see all that Thermail knew lost forever. For when Thermail learned of the fate of her stolen eggs, she flew into a seething rage before impaling herself on the tip of Mount Wyrmspire, destroying most of her lair and the heaps of lore and knowledge she had gathered as Loremaster.

As part of his fascination with knowledge, Vasdenjas entertains Name-giver visitors in his lair. In this, he repeats the mistakes of Thermail. A skilled infiltrator could gain a great deal from a visit to Vasdenjas' lair, perhaps enough information to enter it again in secret. Such an opportunity could yield a vast haul of draconic lore that even I cannot provide to you.

[As familiar as he is with the past, Talespeaker knows not to repeat its mistakes. I believe the wards and protections of Wyrmspire would dissuade any Denairastas spy, but some additional precautions might be in order.]

Study and Understand Patterns

Vasdenjas works to study and understand True Patterns, especially those of living things. To this end he collects Pattern Items, allowing him access to the patterns he wishes to study. He also collects creatures and objects themselves, allowing him to study them directly. The Pattern Items that could be found in Vasdenjas' lair could make the capture of one of Varulus' Pattern Items seem minor by comparison. With control of additional vital Pattern Items, there would be no limit to what your magic could accomplish. Work to discover what Pattern Items Vasdenjas possesses, and guard well your own, lest they fall into his power

Investigate the Nature of Aardelea

As a scholar and Loremaster, Vasdenjas knows a great deal about the history of dragonkind, and has grown very excited with the possibilities offered by the existence of Aardelea. He has been fascinated with drakes for some time now, and I expect him to actively research how the drake spirit within the Book of Blue Spirits became bound with that of the human girl. He has already proposed to his peers the possibility of recreating the accident that bound the spirit to Aardelea in order to intentionally create a new human-drake hybrid. If this can be accomplished, they might better understand how the drake spirit merged with Aardelea, as well as better understand the nature of the changes Aardelea is going through. The possibility exists that they may pursue it for breeding purposes as well.

Thus far, Vasdenjas' preliminary experiments have met with little success. There is no lack of Name-giver volunteers—particularly among Mountainshadow's villages—who would be honored to become a drake and to serve the great dragons, but the process seems to be missing some factor Vasdenjas has not been able to isolate. So far, all he has created are twisted mockeries of true drakes, which are carefully studied and then destroyed. If we can capture one of these "failed drakes," we may learn more about the phenomenon Vasdenjas is trying to recreate. His techniques may be quite useful to us in dealing with other matters.





[Needless to say, the results of any such experiment must not fall into the Outcast's clutches. Talespeaker, indeed each of us, must exercise great caution with projects such as these.]

Provide Knowledge to the Young Races

Vasdenjas believes it important for him to educate the Young Races of Barsaive. He does this out of a noble obligation and a love of pontificating. As a superior, knowledgeable being, Vasdenjas feels he should pass on some of his great wisdom and help illuminate the less developed Name-givers, particularly in matters pertaining to dragons, which the Young Races know next to nothing about. Much of the information he passes on to the scholars of Throal is similar to things I have told you: lore about the land and its creatures, as well as lore on dragons as a race. However, where I tell you the truth of these matters, Vasdenjas carefully edits much of his information, averring (probably at the insistence of his fellow great dragons) that there is certain information that needs to remain secret.

Vasdenjas' doling out knowledge can prove a double edged sword. In so doing, he may create animosity among his own peers, ripples of dissent that could become waves with the right motivation. He also fires the desire of the Young Races to know more and makes it clear that the dragons of Barsaive have withheld information from them about a great many things, not the least of which is the doings and history of the Theran Empire. Young King Neden has proven impetuous in the past. Perhaps when his dragon allies refuse to give him enough information to clearly defeat the Theran Empire and keep him on the throne, he might turn against them, especially if he can be convinced that the great dragons are only using him as their puppet to strike against Thera, regardless of the risk to his kingdom and his people.

Gain Revenge for Thermail

Vasdenjas does not even know of this goal yet, but should he learn the truth of the creation of the hydra and the death of Thermail, then I am certain the Master of Secrets will turn his resources over to my destruction, and the destruction of you, my children. Vasdenjas makes a resourceful enemy, but I am sure the current circumstances will help to restrain his wrath, if he should discover the truth. The great dragons are concerned with the Theran upstarts and cannot split their attention to deal with us as well. If Vasdenjas were to withdraw his resources from Mountainshadow's network of spies, it would be a serious loss and might even shatter the great dragons' delicate illusion of unity and cooperation. Indeed, it would please me if Vasdenjas were to defy the will of a Council to seek revenge against me. Then he might get a taste of exile himself, giving me the opportunity to meet him claw-to-claw, equally outcast. I shall consider the possibilities.

[Talespeaker, I must invoke the Rite of Authority and remind you to convene a Council if you wish to speak of this matter. Do not be tempted to act rashly by one who has proven his treachery. Remember, the whole of this document may be riddled with carefully chosen lies and half-truths to sunder our unity and set us upon each other for the Outcast's amusement. If the Outcast's words concerning Thermail and the hydras prove to be true, trust that you will not be alone in your thirst for vengeance.]





VESTRIVAN

[It was only after reading the Outcast's words concerning Vestrivan that I realized just how little Talespeaker has shared with us concerning his brother's corruption; little more, in fact, than was revealed to the Young Races in the Throal Library's Creatures of Barsaive tome. There are stories of course, but their "truth" is questionable at best, and they differ vastly depending on the teller of the tale. Indeed, the Name Vestrivan has become legend since Talespeaker scribed his brief tale of this brother's struggle and loss at the hands of the Horror that now possesses him.]

At the time of Vestrivan's corruption, much of our attention was focused on our conflict with the Impertinent Ones, and our response was little more than shock and dismay. Many of us let the blame fall on Vestrivan himself for allowing himself to be seduced. Others spoke harshly of Talespeaker, claiming that he should have seen the consequences of Vestrivan's path and acted to intervene. It is my opinion that while both Talespeaker and Vestrivan must be held accountable for their actions and non-actions, we are all to blame for lacking foresight and allowing such an unspeakable event transpire right under our snouts.

Out of respect for Talespeaker, I have purposely directed my attentions elsewhere, choosing not to endeavor to learn the truth of Vestrivan's possession by the Horror. But where Talespeaker may have thought his brother lost forever to the Horror, if we are to believe the Outcast, it seems that there is still hope to save Vestrivan.

In light of the Outcast's discovery of Vestrivan's dual nature, we must consider the possibility that we may have something to learn from him. If his association with the Horrors has indeed broadened his magical knowledge, Vestrivan could yet be a valuable asset to our efforts, and to those of our Cathay ally Dvilgaynon. The question that remains, however, is whether or not Vestrivan can be saved from what appears to be his destined fate. While his knowledge may aid our efforts against the Impertinent Ones, if he should prove to be too unpredictable, we must be willing to deal with him and his sorcerous followers now, before they become too powerful.]

Few dragons strike such unreasoning fear into the hearts of Name-givers as does the Horror-marked Vestrivan. Despite the failure of my fellow great dragons to recognize Vestrivan as a "great dragon," he is doubtless as powerful—considering the gifts from his "patron"—as most other great dragons in Barsaive.

Vestrivan's story is not merely about his villainy. Indeed, there is a more tragic story in Vestrivan's past, of hubris and power and lost brotherhood with his fellow dragons. For within Vestrivan there are two minds, two distinct beings: The old Vestrivan, broodmate of Vasdenjas and magical scholar, and the Horror that accepted Vestrivan's ill-considered invitation to reside alongside the soul of the scholar. In short, there is more to Vestrivan's story than anyone has suspected.

Vestrivan's Nature

According to Vasdenjas' report concerning his brother in his Creatures of Barsaive tome in the Library of Throal, Vestrivan and Vasdenjas were born in a twin-shelled egg, two apparently normal eggs joined end to end. Such proximity allowed the two to share the same intimate telepathy that a sire shares with his brood. I theorize that such intimacy is what made the two brothers so close, and so identical in mind and spirit. The pair together grew to become two of the greatest scholars of all dragonkind.

It is interesting to note, however, that the brothers approached their shared destiny in very different ways. Vasdenjas was anxious to travel the world and learn from experience, while Vestrivan wanted to delve through the accumulated knowledge of all Name-givers, dragons included, and benefit from the experience of others. This is where the brothers were destined to forever veer from each other's lives.

In their youth, the pair could not be parted from each other. They made their sire, Yuichotol, proud as they quickly picked up the traditions and rituals of my kind. I think the first divisions became apparent during this time, as Vasdenjas sought always to journey as far out from the lair as they were allowed in order to see the world and converse with others, while Vestrivan sought only to dig slowly through the memory crystals Yuichotol had provided for study.

Later in their lives, as Named adults, they stayed close but grew even further apart. While Vasdenjas traversed the lands, conversing and learning of creatures and Name-givers and legends, Vestrivan again kept mostly to Barsaive and the lands near their lair, devoting his mind to learning and studying even more about magic. As they became great dragons, Vasdenjas settled down considerably, but still stayed as active and outgoing as other great dragons. The brothers grew close to Thermail, Loremaster of the time, becoming ardent students, thoroughly exploring her vast store of knowledge. At this time, a competition developed between the two for Thermail's favor, and their relationship became strained and soured. When Thermail chose Vasdenjas for companionship, Vestrivan cloistered himself away, and





shunned most contact with other dragons. Instead, he threw himself thoroughly into his passion and lust for knowledge, eagerly devouring any scrap and tidbit of magical lore in particular. Over his years of self-isolation, Vestrivan came to be an unprecedented wielder of magical power—very few arcane secrets escaped him.

As the Scourge approached, the brothers turned their attention to the study of Horrors and their effects. As always, Vasdenjas scoured the land, seeking tales and information and direct experience. Vestrivan also learned of the Horrors, but from memory crystals and old and musty tomes. Witnessing what he had, Vasdenjas realized the raw, destructive and evil power of the Horrors. Conversely, his brother came to view them as potential sources of magical knowledge. Both were correct.

When Vestrivan had read every magical tome known to the Name-givers, and some unknown and since lost forever, he came to the realization that only one realm of magical learning remained. To fully understand every nuance of patterns, names, threads and blood magic, Vestrivan would have to learn at the feet of the Horrors.

The Transformation

Vestrivan learned of the Horrors from scholarly works penned by races and peoples that have vanished since the Age of Dragons. Those tomes, certainly as old or older than the Theran's Books of Harrow, are supposedly long gone, physically devoured by Vestrivan after reading them and realizing their content. Indeed, one version of the legend of the Book of Scales suggests that the Horrors created the Book to replace the tomes Vestrivan consumed.

Like his brother, Vestrivan proved to be defiantly curious. Anxious to learn the unlearnable—Horror magic—Vestrivan used the knowledge within those devoured tomes and made contact with the Horrors. And the Horrors responded with the greed and hunger for which they are so well known.

Do not be mistaken, Vestrivan was no fool and had prepared himself thoroughly. He was not easily defeated. He is a dragon, after all, even if extremely misguided. Based on Vasdenjas' report, Vestrivan struggled with the formless spirit for at least forty years. At first, Vasdenjas sought to aid his brother, but Vestrivan spurned him, and invoked the Rite of Inviolable Self-Direction. Vasdenjas had no choice but to watch his brother struggle from afar, and slowly succumb.

Eventually Vestrivan capitulated to the Horror, as nearly everyone and everything eventually does to an entity as powerful as it was. But the defeat was not complete. The Horror was either unwilling or unable to completely devour Vestrivan's mind, and in fact was lured and trapped inside Vestrivan's body itself—which they both now share. Based on tales told by students of Vestrivan, this was exactly what he wanted—Vestrivan was able to continue studying the Horrors and their magic, while the Horror gained a form in which to walk through our world.

There are several disturbing facets of this malign relationship, the most surprising of which is the discovery of Vestrivan's dual personalities. He seems to share his body with the Horror, but the two are never both present at the same time. Sometimes the Horror's personality is at the forefront, and sometimes Vestrivan's old persona comes through. Sadly, as time progresses, the old Vestrivan is seen less and the Horror is seen more. One intriguing—though remote—possibility, is that the two might eventually merge into a single being, combining the wisdom and intellect of the dragon Vestrivan with the destructive hunger of the Horror.

Vasdenjas suggests in his testimony that while aware of his brother's struggle with a Horror, he was not aware of any dealings Vestrivan had with the Horrors, and in any case was helpless to stop him. Perhaps. But in the time leading up to Vestrivan's forty year struggle, certainly Vasdenjas could have done something to redirect his brother's passions. I am left wondering if such a powerful great dragon was truly helpless or not. This brotherly competitiveness may prove useful in our plans.

[While intriguing from a theoretical point of view, the prospect of Vestrivan and the Horror that possesses him merging into a single being is terrifying. In contrast to the Outcast's interest, I sincerely hope it does not come to be, for if there is any chance of Vestrivan being freed from the Horror, that hope rests on Vestrivan continuing to battle for control. If he were to merge with the Horror, I fear he would be lost for all time.]

And once again, the Outcast strives to create unrest among us, provoking Talespeaker by suggesting his supposed rivalry with his brother kept him from actually helping Vestrivan. I remind you all, to consider that the Outcast might very well have intended for us to read this, that it might be written to instigate premature action. We must not allow the Outcast's words to incite us until we are ready to strike—and then the Outcast will truly feel our anger.]





To avoid further confusion between the two distinct personalities living within the dragon, from here on I shall refer to the scholar, and Vasdenjas' brother, as Vestrivan, and the Horror which possesses the dragon by the Name he has been called for generations: the Despoiler of the Land.

The Despoiler of the Land

The Name Despoiler of the Land was given Vestrivan by communities of Name-givers in the lowlands of the Twilight Peaks, who remained outside the kaers as long as possible before the Scourge. These people had hoped to harvest as much food from their farmland as possible before retreating to their shelters. Unfortunately, the Despoiler had other plans. As they flew across the countryside, farmland and forests dried up and died beneath them. Anywhere they lingered, the taint of corruption overwhelmed natural life in the area, transforming and destroying it. The lowland farmers found their crops devastated seemingly overnight, and the efforts of their best elementalists were fruitless. They themselves began to fall victim to curious effects, losing their magic and experiencing memory loss. They were chased into their kaers without the food supplies they were depending on, and I'm certain many suffered from starvation and food shortages.

After considerable research, I have concluded that the Despoiler of the Land is somehow a "Nametaker." By this, I mean the Horror has the power to unravel the patterns of Named things—to un-Name them. The Despoiler's power seems to make people forget who they are, what things are called, how they are enchanted. During the early years of the Scourge, the Despoiler was able to un-Name previously bountiful fields, wizards' keeps, rivers and lakes, even a living elemental in one case. Without Names, the adepts were unable to cast spells to rejuvenate the crops and game, and eventually the fields seem to have been forgotten by their very owners.

I suspect this un-Naming magic was part of the magic used to hide Parlainth from the very Horrors that taught its use to the wizards in the first place. If this is true, one has to question the real means and motives of those responsible for the city's disappearance.

Now that centuries have passed and the Despoiler has become more sophisticated, he now un-Names things so he can later reName them to his own taste. Presumably he wants to someday weave his own form of Horror magic into his treasures when the domination of Vestrivan is complete.

Until then, the Despoiler has been gathering an inventory of weapons, art objects, and even abandoned orphans of Name-giver races, and holding them until they can later be Named. Reports of this bounty wildly vary, ranging from an eclectic collection of rare weapons from extinct civilizations all the way to armies of fully grown warriors raised from lost children, held in magical stasis in hidden caves until the time comes when the Despoiler decides to act.

[It is passages like these that give my mind ease. That the Outcast can truly believe any of this is possible gives me great hope that he and his children are not so powerful as we once thought.]

If any of this is to be believed, it surely is not as the Outcast has portrayed it. There is no such magic as un-Naming. The closest type of magic to that described here is depatterning, similar to the effects of excessive blood magic use (most often suffered by arrogant Therans), or perhaps a natural form of the pattern-weakening spells used by nethermancers. Given the connection between nethermancy and Horror magic, I suspect the latter is closest to the truth. Even still, the magic used to send Parlainth to astral space was of a very different type.

Regardless, the Outcast has clearly made an enormous leap in reasoning, one which has led him far astray. To weaken, shatter, or even ultimately destroy a True Pattern may be similar to what we'd expect the results of un-Naming to be, but the two are not the same. Even the most damaged pattern can be restored, often quite easily, as was recently witnessed by Rathann, one of Doll-Maker's drakes. If the tales of the Despoiler gathering items and Name-givers and "un-Naming" them are in fact true, all we need to do is slay the Horror and spend the effort to restore their damaged patterns.]

Location and Lair

Where this dragon lairs depends on which personality is at the forefront. Vestrivan, the scholar, has not been spotted since the Scourge, the reputation of his worse half preceding him throughout Barsaive and even into areas of the Theran Empire.

Despite my best efforts, I still don't know where Vestrivan lairs when the Despoiler is not in control. I suspect Vestrivan does not lair anywhere, instead spending his time racing from place to place and undoing the Despoiler's deeds while avoiding capture and death.





But while Vestrivan's lair, if any, remains unknown, I believe I have found the lair of the Despoiler hidden in the Twilight Peaks. This discovery comes with a terrible price, as several of your agents, members of the Holders of Trust entrusted to me, had been researching rumors of an elite and highly secretive magical school, where arcane arts are taught and forgotten languages are spoken. The most promising rumors led the agents to the Twilight Peaks, where they indeed found such a school, at least according to the last messages I received from them. This school was led by the dragon calling itself Vestrivan. Based on their description of its lair and the sorts of magic being studied, I assume this to be the Despoiler. Unfortunately, fragments of a hand-scribbled note are all I have to work from. Apparently, each agent who went to this school was eventually found out and killed, or worse, by the dragon and his students.

The Despoiler, posing as the ancient sage Vestrivan, has been gathering the most power hungry and curious adepts from throughout Barsaive and beyond. Under the guise of a "school" for sorcery, the Despoiler slowly indoctrinates talented adepts in the strange and alien ways of the Horrors. This makes the Despoiler entirely unlike most other Horrors in that he seems to be building toward some future plan, rather than madly, blindly destroying.

Because the Despoiler must feed on negative emotions such as fear and anger, as all Horrors do, his "school" is apparently a living nightmare to survive. Students are placed in no-win situations and competitive learning environments that always end in the death of at least one of the participants. Their dreams are haunted by promises of power mixed with visions of the Despoiler's origin, on a twisted world located somewhere in the nether worlds. These students are also slowly un-Named by the Despoiler, their essential magical fabric unraveled and remade as the Horror decrees. By the end of their indoctrination, the surviving students are completely remade in the Despoiler's image. There are hints that some students have been traveling Barsaive in the hope of starting additional schools on behalf of their mentor.

Though I know him to be laired somewhere in the Twilight Peaks, I have nothing else concerning the location of this school to share with you. The Despoiler takes great care to protect the location of his lair, and apparently only those the Despoiler intends to tutor learn how to find him. Not even the crystal raiders that reside within the Twilight Peaks know where, precisely, the Despoiler's lair may be; they suspect it must lie on the side facing Death's Sea. If this is so, travelers must either be magically protecting themselves from the Sea's terrible molten heat, or receive protection from the Despoiler, thus ensuring that only the chosen few ever find the lair.

Servants

The Despoiler's students are valuable servants indeed, for they spread the Horror's bizarre un-Naming efforts farther and wider than the dragon could himself. Students travel in groups of 3 to 8, usually a single wizard or nethermancer followed by a handful of warriors. If there is any good news regarding the Despoiler's students, it is that they have apparently lost the ability to weave threads between themselves and other patterns, and thus are unable to use enchanted, Named objects. Their other magical abilities seem otherwise unchanged.

Single exceptional students also travel Barsaive, spreading the word of the Despoiler's elite college. They are unparalleled in their ability seek out and whet the appetite of power hungry and greedy adepts wherever they go.

One of these recruiters of particular interest is an obsidimen wizard named Urgulan. This obsidiman is apparently responsible for most of the thefts of orphans. Urgulan offers to purchase infants born to extremely poor parents, or those left on the doorsteps of houses and fortresses by anonymous parents. Street urchins are naturally attracted to him as well, and often follow him of their own accord when he leaves town. All the children he gathers follow Urgulan back to the Despoiler's lair, even when the trip takes weeks.

Allies and Enemies

Vestrivan, and by extension the Despoiler, has no allies. Few suspect the truth of Vestrivan's inner conflict with his Horror, but even those who do are unlikely to grant him mercy—Vestrivan is far too unpredictable and powerful to allow it. The dragon's enemies are many, not the least of which are the other great dragons of Barsaive. The Despoiler must be a worthy adversary indeed if the combined strength of all the other dragons have been unable to stop its reign of terror so far.

I am tempted to try and contact Vestrivan myself, to at least discuss the possibility of an alliance against the rest of the dragons. He would be a valuable ally, but an alliance with a Horror-possessed dragon may prove too dangerous to pursue.





[Once again the Outcast presumes incorrectly. Why would we consider Vestrivan an enemy? He is a victim of the Horrors, not too unlike the countless thousands of victims who suffered during the Scourge. But where those victims are lost forever, we may yet be able to save Vestrivan.]

Vestrivan's Goals

As with the rest of this report, we must consider both halves of Vestrivan's persona when addressing his goals.

Based on the wildly divergent actions taken by the dragon, it's apparent Vestrivan and the Despoiler are aware of each other. Vestrivan's primary goal seems to be simply to regain control of his body, undoing the evil done by the Despoiler. Vestrivan alone seems to understand the Despoiler's magic, and uses this insight, as well as his vast knowledge of Horror magic, in his lone struggle against that which possesses him. Since Vestrivan is aware of the Despoiler, I can only assume the Despoiler is aware of Vestrivan's wish to be rid of it, meaning that Vestrivan's efforts to thwart the Despoiler may be doomed to fail.

The Despoiler is another case. Because of the difficulty of gathering information and the nature of the Despoiler's magic, I must resort to educated guesses concerning his motivations. We know he is gathering treasures and is training willing adepts in all manner of disciplines and Horror magic. Finally, we know the Despoiler has gathered living beings, Name-givers and monsters alike, to un-Name them for future uses.

Where does all this lead? Simple megalomania or a deeper plan? Whichever the case, it appears the Despoiler is patiently continuing on its present path, awaiting Vestrivan's final fall to the Horror's power before it unveils its ultimate plans.

[Though I once thought Vestrivan forever lost to the Horror, as Talespeaker once did, the Outcast's words have convinced me that we might save Vestrivan from his fate at the hands of the Horror that lives within him. Thus, I have begun research that may aid in this cause. Of significance is the fact that the Horror, referred to as the Despoiler in the Outcast's words, is not Named. The Outcast mistakenly assumes that the Horror's Name is indeed the Despoiler of the Land, when in truth that Name was given only after the Horror had claimed Vestrivan. It is towards discovering this name that I am committing my efforts, for before we are able to battle this Horror, we must first know this Horror for what he is, not for what he has done. Only the Horror's Name can lead us to that knowledge.

My Peers and Equals, I believe it is our duty to our brother that we endeavor to help Vestrivan, and purge the Horror from him. I have spoken with Talespeaker concerning this matter, and he has agreed to provide us with all he knows of his brother and of Vestrivan's struggle against the Horror inside him. I understand that I am violating protocol and tradition by speaking of this outside the confines of a convened Council, but I cite the Rite of Urgency and ask you to consider aiding in this effort, for surely together we will find a way to free our fellow dragon, enabling Vestrivan to join our ranks once again. I will of course abide by any request to address this matter formally, but urge you to grant my request. I await word from you all regarding this matter]

